Three Gates on a Side.

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THREE GATES ON A SIDE

And Other Sermons

BY

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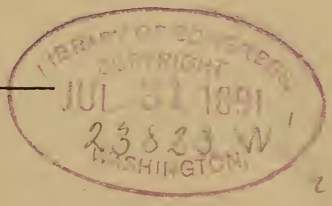

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I

Three Gates on a Side.

On the East Three Gates; On the North Three Gates; On the South Three Gates, and on the West Three Gates.—Rev. xxi:13.

THREE gates on each side of the celestial quadrangle. So much as to the accessibility of the heavenly city. So that no one coming from the North need go around on to the South side in order to get in; no one approaching from the East need go around on to the West side in order to get in. Wherever outside of the kingdom we may any of us happen to be standing, we are each of us close to some threshold. Three gates on a side. A good many of us here are not in the kingdom, perhaps; but the assurance that there is not one such but has his foot even now close to some threshold creates the hope and inspires the faith that some such will this morning enter into the kingdom. It is in pursuance of that end that we speak.

Christ is himself gateway impersonated—what Scripture calls "open door." That fact is familiar; but our particular matter this morning is that he is not simply one open door to which we all of us have

to come in order to enter, but that he is himself a good many open doors, one of which is cut in the wall immediately in front of each of us to let us enter. Three gates in each wall. Christ is not only one gate—he is all the gates; and his multiplicity matches our diversity. So that each man to be saved will be saved by his own particular Christ, and enter the kingdom through his own special, private portal.

In reading the narrative of Christ's early dealings with the people he moved among, you have probably remarked what a variety of note he struck in order to hit the music that was in each ear. The sick believed in him because he healed them; the blind, because he gave them new eyes; the hungry, because he procured them bread; the thirsty, because he made them wine; the discouraged, because he brought them a new hope; the wicked, because he forgave them. He conducted men to God, but he was all kinds of open doors for them to go through, and a separate door for each particular one of them to go through—like a mirror that answers for every face; like an organ that sufficeth for every tune.

And men have still their own special Christ. He is as various as the men are various that believe in him. We believe in the same Christ, and yet we have not the same belief in Christ; like two men standing on the opposite side of a hill, who have a view of the same hill, but not the same view

of the hill. We are in that respect like different kinds of flowers growing out in the sunshine; one flower, when it is touched by white light, will extract from the white light one particular tint, another flower will extract another particular tint from the same white light. So, while we all, in a way, believe in Christ, we each believe in our own way; and he is not the same to any two of us. If the question were to be passed around, "What think ye of Christ?" no two, except as they answered in some one's else words, would return the same answer. No one statement is quite valid for two people; just as you know that no one rainbow is quite good for two eyes; each eye has its own rainbow. Each man's own study of the Gospel, each man's own personal experience, extracts from the white light of revelation his own tint. So far as there is sincerity in the matter, there will be a great deal of individuality in the matter.

This leads on to say that Christ, as you apprehend him, not as I apprehend him, not as your neighbor apprehends him, but Christ as you apprehend him, is your Christ—is your open door. You, probably, have some ideas about him that are quite definite. Then behind those ideas are others that stretch back into the dim distance along a long line of perspective. But there is some one conception of him (perhaps more than one) which you have, that is defined enough so that you could think it out to yourself.

You might even be able to tell it aloud. Possibly you could make a written statement of it that would look clear and read intelligibly. The particular thought you may have of him may be that he is the Son of God; or that he is the Son of man; or that he is the teacher of a new system of morality; or that he is the personification of the spirit of self-sacrifice; or that he is a fountain of comfort or a well-spring of strength. Some one thing or other, probably, he means to you in a peculiar way. There is some one point at which he touches you; some one point where his meaning as a person is specially gathered. What this point will be will depend a good deal upon the way in which you have been educated—considerably upon your own temperament and condition. If we are in any particular distress, Christ will be likely, first of all, to mean to us the Being who can relieve that distress; just as to the blind people in Galilee he meant, first of all, the restorer of sight; just as he means to the poor inebriates down in our Mission, the Power who saves a man from his appetites. We dress him in a garb woven out of our necessities. Human necessities are the cleft into which the wedge of the Gospel strikes.

But whether due to difference in the way in which we have been taught, or to difference in the way we are conditioned, there is this difference in the aspect which Christ wears to us; and that is the main point

we have to do with here. My Christ is not exactly your Christ; and I have got to be saved by my Christ, and you have got to be saved by yours. Doubtless as we come to know him better, and to enter more deeply into the intimacies of his character and spirit, our conceptions of him will have more and more in common, and we shall draw nearer and nearer to each other in our views and experience of him. It would be like vessels running from different ports on this side of the Atlantic to a common port—say Liverpool—on the other side of the Atlantic. One vessel sails out from Boston, another from New York, and so from different points along down the coast to Savannah. Their routes may lie a good ways apart to begin with, and so, for 1500 or 2000 knots after they get out to sea; but as they approach Liverpool their lines of travel more and more thicken up, till by the time they pass Holyhead, they are all running substantially the same course, and you could not judge from their bearings but what they all hailed from Boston, or all hailed from Savannah, or even from Maracaibo or Rio. There is no point on the coast from which a vessel cannot easily reach the highway of transatlantic travel, provided only it heaves anchor and keeps its nose oceanwards. So, when we get into the heart of the heavenly city we may be very closely neighbored in our views and experiences, and none the less so from having first entered the city through gates that lie toward dif-

ferent points of the compass or at opposite angles of the celestial metropolis.

But Christ is gateway; and your Christ (I speak now particularly to any one of you that has never entered into the kingdom) your Christ—that is to say, the particular view you have of Christ—is your gate. Your gate may be on the opposite side of the city from what mine is—clear off at the northeast corner, perhaps. If you were to state your idea of Christ, you might not find one officer of this church or one member of this church that would agree with you. That need not make any difference. It is a part of the goodness and wisdom of the Lord that gates have been widely and generously distributed for the convenience of travelers and strangers. It is not necessary for you to spend the better part of your life perambulating town bounds to find the door that some eminent saint or other of the old or new church went in at. Three gates on a side. The Lord is *nigh* unto them that call upon him. Christ, in the conception you already have of him, is your gate. There is no traveling for you to do in order to reach the gate; no hunting necessary in order to find it. No waiting requisite. The Bible would not say, "Choose ye this day," if there were anything to wait for. Such words as "now" and "to-day" would have to be left out if the gate were anywhere but directly in front of you. If you needed to know more about the matter than you do now, or to have a more cor-

rect or thorough idea of Christ and the doctrines of redemption than you possess already, then we should have to bid men take Christ as soon as they could get some of their difficulties cleared up, or as soon as they had made themselves better acquainted with the New Testament. We could not say, "Come to-day," but try and be ready to come next Sabbath or next week, or week after next. The biblical idea of "to-day" just matches this apocalyptic idea of three gates on a side—every man's gate close to him.

The object of this is not to encourage the notion that it makes no difference how little idea a man has of Christ. Our only point is that the veriest scintilla of an idea, if made available, is enough to begin with. Supposing in a dark, starless night you become lost in the woods. The glimmer of a distant candle reaches your eye and you are not lost any longer. There may not be light enough about it to show you where you are, but you are not lost any longer, because there is light enough about it to give you a direction. You do not sit down on an old log and say, If it were an electric light or a bonfire I would avail myself of it. Perhaps it is a bonfire made obscure by foliage or by distance. But the size of the light will make no difference with your feeling that you are not lost any more, because that light shows you that your foot is on the threshold of recovery. That light is doorway to recovery, and

whether it is a big door or a little door makes no difference, provided only you go through the door and quit calculating the arithmetic proportions of the casing.

Any smallest, feeblest conception you may have of Christ, will answer every purpose, if only you will treat it in the same way that you would treat what appeared to be the glimmer of a distant candle, falling upon your eye by night, in the midst of a black forest. Light is a sure guide, because, unlike sound, it goes in straight lines. If you were to strike the tired, diminished end of a sunbeam a million million miles from the sun, you are on the certain track of the sun the instant you begin treading upwards the glimmering highway that that sunbeam spreads out for you. And wherever, and howsoever far out, upon the circumference of Christ's character you take your position and begin threading inward any one of its radiating lines, you are moving by a line as straight as a sunbeam toward the heart and center of the entire matter. One radius is about as good as another for finding the center. Each of the twelve gates thresholded a main avenue of the heavenly Jerusalem.

In conference with such as come to see me with reference to the matter of uniting with the Church, it is my habit to ask them what, in their judgment, it is to be a Christian. Of course the question receives a wide variety of answers, but those answers

usually have wrapped up in them (for this is the gate that men more commonly enter by), as a kernel, this idea, that to be a Christian is to be as nearly as we can in our daily life what Christ would have us be. That is probably with most of us our initial conception; and what the majority of people think, is apt to have in it a good deal of truth. When the Disciples were bidden by Christ to follow him, clearly that meant to them at the outset little more than patterning their lives after his, going where he went and doing as he did. There was where they first took hold of the matter. Anything like mere imitation seems mostly to disappear from their life in its later manifestations and further developments, but it was not much but imitation to begin with. They commenced by obeying him and trying to be like him. Christ's early instruction to them was in this line. Now it must needs be said that this obediently doing what God in Christ enjoins upon us, important and indispensable as it, of course, is, is by no manner of means the best and most distinctive part of the Christian matter. At the same time, there are two things to be said about it that are practical and that are in line with our morning's thought.

The first is, that while studiously doing as Christ bids us is not the best part of the Lord's matter, it is singulary educating, and contributes with wonderful facility to initiate us into the best part of the

Lord's matter. Studious obedience, scrupulous patterning after a model, is the outer court of almost every temple of acquisition that a man can enter. It is a very small part of the matter of skilled and graceful chirography to sit down before a copy-book and painstakingly imitate the strokes there drawn for us to pattern after; but there is no way of learning to write with easy grace but by the tuition of painstaking imitation. There is no liberty that has not to be acquired by obeying. There is a good deal of servility in studying to be able to state in exact phraseology the thoughts of the master minds that have lived and worked before us; but till we have learned with precision to think the thoughts of other men after them, we do not know how to think our own thoughts for ourselves. And it is still more true when you pass from the area of mechanics and art into that of ethics, and free spirit. There is no way by which a child can so learn to know the best and deepest that is in his own father as by obeying him. If the wills are coincident everything else becomes a kind of common property. If two strings vibrate at the same rate, one may be a good deal longer than the other, but they will sound the same tone. Which is what Christ in one instance says of himself—"My judgment is just because I seek not mine own will but the will of him that sent me:" certain that he told God's truth because he had no will separate from

God's will. The short string told the same story as the long string because the two vibrated with one beat. Obedience, the secret of spiritual vision; loyalty to the word of Christ, the quickest avenue into the mystery of Christ. The common habit is to put divine mysteries too early in the curriculum. A good many people stand aloof from Christ because they are not clear on the matter of his divinity. There is not much use in trying to believe in the divinity of Christ except as that belief comes as the fruitage of loyalty to Christ. You will know him as fast as you obey him. Ordering our lives after his will afford us the best evidences of Christianity. "If any man will do his will he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself."

That is one point; obedience to Christ is only gateway so far as relates to the full meaning of Christ and of Christian life, but it is gateway that portals one of the central avenues conducting directly to meanings that are more essential and complete. The other point is that this matter of taking Christ's commands and doing them is not only gateway, but gateway that opens itself immediately in our face. We have not to search around in order to find it. The door is directly in front of us. Christ's admonitions as to the way we are to deal with ourselves and with each other and with God, address them-

selves to us authoritatively. Argument has no particular relevancy to them. Proof neither helps nor hinders them. They carry their own conviction. The lessons he gives us as to the kind of thoughts we should think, the sort of words we should speak, the ways of forbearance and loving kindness in which we should carry ourselves toward our neighbors—all these things men listen to respectfully and approvingly when read. There is no disposition to quarrel about them. We think so perfectly alike about them that there is no point upon which a quarrel could pin itself. And not only is that true of people that are grown, but it is as true of the children. A child can begin to be a Christian when he is ten as well as when he is fifteen or twenty. To such a child that asked me how he or she could begin to be a Christian, I would say—read every day out of the Gospel two or three verses of what Christ said and did; then kneel down and ask God to help you to be like Christ in your words and deeds; then go out into the midst of your play or your study or your work, and do as nearly as you can what you asked God to help you to do.

And what is good for a child in this matter is good for an adult, for we are all of us children with some little difference in our years. Is there probably any one here, even of those who do not quite consider themselves Christians, who would not think it wise to

preface each day by reminding himself of some lesson conveyed by the word or example of Christ, and then asking from God the strength needed in order to make that lesson efficient in his own daily walk? I am not saying that that is the only way to become a Christian, but only that it is one way; and that it is a way that some of you would feel to be so free from objections that, if you chose, you could adopt it without any more waiting, finding nothing in it which your conscience would disapprove, or to which your judgment would take exception: which is only another way of saying that that is a threshold of entrance into the heavenly kingdom—a threshold that lies immediately at your feet; no seeking necessary; no hunting required; no philosophic doubts so far forth, needing to be resolved. Up to this point it is a matter involving no theological embarrassment, no intellectual complication. We have reduced it to the same simple terms with which it addressed itself to the Lord's first followers: by the help of God reduplicating in our own sphere the life of Christ. To every one here who believes in that, but who may be out of the kingdom, that, dear friend, is your open door into the kingdom. Your foot is just now on the threshold. Your eye is in line with the central light of the celestial city. Will you by the help of God make Christ, as he is revealed in the Gospel, the pattern of your life?

There is no place left for argument. There are in that no mental difficulties to clear up, no doctrinal haze to brush away. Will you by the help of God make Christ, as he is revealed in the Gospel, the pattern of your life? You stand at the open gate. In front of you is the celestial city.

II

God Is Spirit.

God Is Spirit.—John iv; 24.

GOD is spirit—which is the reading of the new revision, as given in the margin. Not *a* spirit; not one out of many spririts; not one of a class. "A" is indefinite, but not nearly so indefinite as when there is *no* "A." That little word, small as it is, gives tired mind something against which it likes to lean a little of its weight; but if erased, thought is left to its own helplessness and bewilderment; which is healthy—sometimes. There are certain results which can never be attained, either in our mental or religious discipline, except as we once in a while bravely stand up in front of a truth that shows to us no edge and no center.

God is spirit. So worded, the text yields an idea that is without nucleus and without selvedge. No shining little peg which we can confidently wind our small thoughts around; no sloping beach upon which we can shove our small ideas out of reach of the tide and the surf. It is far more a forest to lose ourselves in than one in which to fell timber and

build us a little hut of opinion, or gather chips to kindle us a fire and cook us a little mess of particular doctrine.

God is spirit.* With this word of the Lord we commence another season's study of truth and pursuit after holiness. It is with intention we have prefaced our year's work with a truth comprehensive enough to include everything that can justly be said here between now and next summer. This is the widest, roomiest thing anywhere told us of God. Our text gives us, then, space to float about in without fear of jostling or fouling one another. There is comfort and security always in thinking and feeling along the arc of great circles. The heavens are administered upon broad orbits, hence their exemption from disaster and collision. And, perhaps, also in thinking as in ocean sailing, it is following great circles that brings us most quickly to our destination.

No doubt we have to have our little particular thoughts about matters of religion and morals, exactly as about business and affairs. So we have to have our little houses, but we take pains so to build them up and out from the firmament beneath as to have them participate in the solidity of that firmament; and so we have to have our little halls and chambers, but we take care so to window them up into the firmament overhead as that they shall

*Delivered the first Sabbath after the summer vacation of 1887.

share in the brightness and freshness of that firmament and become part of the vastness that is frontiered by nothing nearer than the stars. The smallest blossom shows a world-beauty, but that is because it is first of all an outcome from the world, and has sucked up world-wideness and meaning through its intertwined roots.

Everything is a failure that does not *begin large*. That holds everywhere. Small matters do not become great by prolonged processes of addition. A heap of small notions cannot be so fused together as to become one great notion. Greatness at best is not so much a matter of quantity as of quality; as the sparkle of the smallest diamond is congener with that of the Orloff, Regent or Koh-i-noor. Knowing many matters is not wisdom, and piling up a lot of little ideas, cob-house fashion, will not give us a great, wealthy theology, any more than the Postdiluvians could lift themselves into heaven by piling up bricks in the plain of Shinar.

How high you can carry the apex of your pyramid will depend upon how much base you give to it. And in these days, when there is so loud and incessant a demand for generous ethics and broad theology, let it be frankly said that no particular ideas that we may have of God or men or morals can possess abiding worth that do not in the last analysis connect back in a living way with the massive breadth of underlying truth that is eternal. We

believe with all our might in a liberal theology, but not in any such liberal theology as a small man unconscious of or indifferent to the eternal verities can sit down in his study or his office or his parlor and extemporize. Liberal theology, deserving the name, is not obtainable by soaking crusts of Calvinism till they are softened to a mush of concession or drawn out into a watery gruel of latitudinarianism; nor by whittling down an old dogma of the Westminster Assembly till it is a peg attenuated enough to fit into the small hole of personal preference and convenience. Liberal theology, no less than any other theology, can derive its worth and dignity only from the immensity and living energy of the basal truths of God with which it is vitalized and irradiated, the same as the smallest rose-petal glows only with the luster that is a quotation from the sun, and the most delicate rose-pistil is held erect by the cosmic energy of all the stars.

Hence, notwithstanding—and not only that, but *just because of*—the popular insistence upon what is practical and easy and congenial in theology and pulpit deliverances, arises the necessity of conferring often with the massive fundamentals of our religion and invigorating our hearts and saturating our thoughts with the life-energy of divine truth forever inherent in them, that so our powers of feeling and of reason may have a safe and sure trend given them, and we be secured against the danger of deck-

ing out our theology with leaves and flowers that stand in no natural relation with the soil of the heavenly Word, and take hue and shape at no impulse that comes down to us from what is divine overhead or that rises up to us from what is eternal beneath.

And, in passing, it lies near by to remark the inspiration that a young or otherwise undisciplined mind can draw from conference with these great unfathomed and unmargined truths of God. No material is offered which more swiftly goes to compose the structure of personal breadth and stamina. The entrance of such thoughts into the mind stimulates its energies and enhances its resources, something as the entering of a great master-mind into a community works magically and baptismally upon all the members of that community. Viewed simply as a matter of mental discipline there is nothing which has so ministered to the possibilities of the intellect as the science of the great things of God. No other theme wakens so deep echoes or arouses to such gropings, searchings and findings. And, as I say, I never cease marveling how accessible such truths as that of our text are to young or otherwise undisciplined minds. We never need be afraid of saying to a child or a barbarian a great thing about God. Mind comes into being religiously endowed. As soon as a plant gets through the crust of the ground it begins to grow *up*. Every man has a

genius for the apprehension of divine things. The cords are all drawn and tuned upon which the marvelous song is to be played. We found it in the chapter read this morning in Romans, where we are told that mind is divinely constructed with a capacity for recognizing divine things, appreciating them as such. You adjust your clock to keep time with the sun. We are adjusted to keep time with the sun. It was just to a poor, unschooled water-bearer that this truth of our text was spoken. We need to remember that. The most difficult thing that could be told her, and yet Christ judged her equal to the lesson. It is curious to notice how soon she showed signs of believing in him; and we may be sure that her whole life was changed, not because he lectured her on the mischiefs and the grossness of her life (and how gross it was is evident enough) but because he let into her seeing eye a vision of the majesty and glory of God. The mind is made for just this. There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. It is well enough to prick men's consciences, but a wounded conscience shows marvelous recuperative powers.

The pulpit needs to preach against particular sin, but needs also to remember that Christ's hint at the adulterous relations in which the Samaritan woman was living was followed up by a discourse that left her thoughts centered not upon herself, nor her

paramour, nor her sin, but upon her unspeakable God. Childhood, ignorance, is no bar to religious perceptions or intuitions. Theology is easier than astronomy or geology; for we are more nearly akin to the Almighty than we are to the stars or the rocks. The Bible is God's breath whispering to the soul of man his own unconscious secrets. Even without the intervention of reasoning or of logic—and sometimes better *without* it than *with* it—the things of God are to the mind a presence and a power; something as we can draw down a great inspiration from the mountains and the constellations, even though we may never have learned the series of geological strata or been taught the laws of Kepler. Only a nice analysis will yield up the chemical elements of the air, but even a coarse string hung in the casement will tremble before the wind and in æolian music utter the wind's deepest meaning and longing, and even a savage will bend to the singing string a listening ear, and the child find the music in the air becoming in his own heart a gladness, and upon his own lips a song.

This unmargined and unfathomed exhibit of God as we have it in our text, is furthermore important and to our instant and constant advantage because a great, wide, profound sense of God in his undiscriminated unity is a necessary preliminary to any safe and helpful estimate of him in the more diversified character under which he has evinced him-

self in later revelation. We believe in Christ, certainly, but we must be thorough and say that faith in Christ is not the beginning of the matter. Faith in the *un*-incarnated God logically antedates and is fundamental to faith in God incarnate. God is the temple; Christ is the vestibule through which we have access to the interior of the temple. We cannot fully enter into the temple's glorious interior except by availing ourselves of the vestibule, but we shall never put foot inside of the vestibule for the purpose of entrance till we have first the profound assurance of a temple into which the vestibule conducts. We may contemplate that temple only in the massive proportions which it exhibits outwardly, its solemn vastness, its cold and distant spires, the shaded, meaningless shapes, painted from within in bright, glowing colors upon the window-lights; but if it is the vestibule that draws us near to the temple in the second instance, it is not till the temple has first drawn us near to the vestibule in the first instance. It is as John records Christ as saying: "No man can come to me except the Father draw him."

Man believes first of all in God. Philip spake the heart of man universal when he said: "Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." While it is true that Christ reveals God, it is antecedently true that only God reveals Christ. Only the sun makes visible the window through which we look sunwards. Only the sun makes available the telescope by which we study

the sun. God is more fundamental than Christ. That is a doctrine taught at Princeton. We are hearing in certain quarters a good deal about a Christo-centric theology, a theology that affects to group itself exclusively around Christ. Such phrasing is plausible and is calculated to tickle an orthodox ear; but the phrase is a good deal of it sophistry, and what of it is not sophistry is cant. It was along this line precisely that the lamented Hodge of Princeton was speaking shortly before his death, when he said: "All theology must be Theocentric, and a great deal of confusion of thought arises from substituting words for thoughts in the pious claim in vogue now-a-days that all theology must be grouped Christo-centrically." Says St. Paul: "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God." And he says also in Corinthians: "When all things shall be subdued unto the Son, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

We can certainly have no narrow, selfish object in representing God as more fundamental than Christ, any more than could Archibald Hodge in the passage just quoted, unless a supreme ambition to know and state things as they are be deemed narrow and selfish. But Theology is one thing, and Christology is another. And it is not because Christ signifies so little to me, but because he signifies so much, that I have the impulse and the courage to push this. But

a correct knowledge of relations, divine as well as human, hinges upon standpoint. A thing is not known until it is known right. Relations cannot be appreciated till you stand where relations can be squarely and distinctly beheld. There is only one outlook which a man can occupy in order to grasp the truth of the solar system; and therefore there was no just science of the solar system till Copernicus. You cannot grasp the topography of a region of country till you reach a standpoint which uncovers to you the physical axis around which its hills, valleys and rivers are organized and its mountains co-ordinated. This illustrates the matter in hand. Theology is greater than Christology and contains it. There is a great deal in religion besides the Son of God, and a great deal that is logically fundamental to him. The one living, unfleshed, undivided and undistinguished God-spirit is the basis of the whole theological pyramid, the root of the entire theological tree; and your Christian superstructure can rise no higher than your theistic base runs deep.

You can be only as sound a trinitarian as you are first profound a monotheist. A keen sense of God in his oneness is the only condition upon which a man ought ever to venture to be a trinitarian, even as it is the only bond strong enough to keep the manifoldness that is in God from splitting apart into competitive sections, and restrain trinitarianism from

becoming only a churchy name for baptized polytheism. I wish that we were all Christians, and felt through and through the divineness that comes near to us in the person and life of God's Son, Jesus Christ. But even in the same instant, I deprecate the language we are so likely, some of us, to use of those who believe in God and try to serve him, but have no distinct conviction as to the nature of Jesus Christ. What I mean is, that we cannot afford to say of a man that he is nothing but a theist. It is a great thing to be able to speak from the heart just the first four words of the Apostles' Creed, even if we have to stop there. The Jews were nothing but theists. Great Abraham — the friend of God — was nothing but a theist; Moses, Samuel, Elijah, David —nothing but theists. They were not unitarians because they did not deny the threefoldness of God, and unitarians do. But not any more were they trinitarians, because they knew nothing about the threefoldness of God, and trinitarians do. But although nothing but theists, their faith in the great God-spirit was a joy to the Almighty and salvation to their own souls; they laid wide the foundations of the future, unconsciously prepared the highway for the coming of the Redeemer, and are to-day, in part, the strong shoulders upon which is upborne our own blessed era of a Father reconciled, a Son become flesh and dwelling among us and a Holy Spirit descending in Pentecostal baptism.

Let me go on still a little farther and say, that however jealous we may be of evangelical truth, and however profoundly we may believe in the divinity of Christ, God manifest in the flesh is deity shorn of a portion of its divine attributes, so far at least as the actual exercise of those attributes is concerned, and no man can limit his gaze to the scope of the divine man of Galilee with any just expectation of fostering in his own mind and life a conception and experience of God in the fullness and completeness of his divine character. In the historic Christ we see God under self-imposed limitations. It is something as in the case of a father taking short steps to keep pace with his little child. He is an adult all the same, but for the instant makes a child revelation of himself for the *sake* of his child. St. Paul expresses this truth when, in speaking of the incarnation, he says in the Second of Philippians (using now the phrasing of the new revision, which is both more accurate and more graphic): "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, *but emptied himself*, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man."

"He emptied himself!"—that is the expression I want you should let stick in your memories. You cannot see the sun except through smoked glass. It is quite like what every *man* has to do in all his

efforts to bless those that are farther down than he. Self-repression is a part of the key to all successful ministration. In teaching an ignorant child, you take care not to let him see all your wisdom; in aiding a poor man you take care not to let him feel all your wealth; in becoming limbs to a paralytic you are careful not to betray all the fullness and exuberance of your own physical vigor. Christ is God manifest in the flesh, but he is at the same time God concealed in the flesh, God "emptied." And especially is there in him the repression of those features of deity that challenge the awe of the worshipper, and stir in him emotions of God's supernal majesty, ineffable glory and power. A smoked glass held before the sun lets through only a part of the sun's rays, and those only of a particular hue. So incarnation is the smoked glass through which we behold the veritable God to be sure, but with most of the divine rays intercepted except those of Godly tenderness and love. Other attributes can be shown in other ways: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

These illustrations have not been used for the purpose of simplifying the doctrine of incarnation—although they may be of some service in that way—but for the purpose of illustrating the truth, that while in the historic Christ there dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, it was no purpose of his to let us *find* and *feel* in him all the fullness of the

Godhead bodily. Godhead that has emptied itself, suppressed itself, is not Godhead that shows God to us in all the round completeness of his supernal perfection. And here suggests itself one of the elements of weakness in current religious knowledge and experience; not that we walk too closely with Christ, or that Christ means too much to us, but that we are not diligently supplementing the knowledge of God's love to us as Christ reveals it, with the knowledge of God's crushing attributes of all-power and everlastingness, filling all space and time, from everlasting to everlasting, before the morning stars, mightier than the noise of many waters, sitting upon the circle of the earth, holding the stars in his hand. These things we do not find and cannot feel in converse or communion with the tired Nazarene sitting on Jacob's well, the tearful Nazarene weeping over Jerusalem, or the dying Nazarene bleeding upon the cross. All the way through from Bethlehem to Olivet you see the pressure of the bonds of voluntary self-limitation. There are a hundred notes in the gamut of God's perfection that are dumb if you let all your religious thought *terminate* in the "man of sorrows" and deity "emptied." God is spirit. We come back to the words of the now sainted Princetonian: "The *un*-incarnate God must be more fundamental than the incarnate God."

The supreme necessity of the human soul, intellectually, morally and spiritually, is to know God.

To this end we will use incarnation with the purpose for which it was divinely intended, and gather the blessed lesson of God's infinite tenderness; but we will remember that there is infinitely much in God which it was no part of God-incarnate's purpose to embody; infinitely much without which even *infinite* tenderness would be of little account. God is more and greater than even his love. We will walk with Christ, but we will walk with our own consciences too. We will stand at the foot of the Cross on Calvary, but we will walk also amid the cold, grey shadows thrown down from the old Arabian mountain of the law. We will search after God in the New Testament scriptures, but we will find him also in the perhaps harder passages, and certainly colder and more towering imagery of the old Bible of the Hebrews; we will come close to him in the volume of his grace, but we will bow ourselves before him in chastened reverence as he speaks down to us from out the oldest of all inspired scriptures, the hills, the forests and the solemn stars. We have gained vastly over the Jews in our apprehension of the love of God, but we have fallen far behind the Jews in our appreciation of God's glory and unspeakable majesty. We have found the Father but we have lost much of the King. Because we have learned that God can become man, we have almost ventured to think that God is man, and are permitting ourselves to approach him with

almost that easy, flippant familiarity with which friend confers with equal friend; to carry ourselves toward his holy and distinct commands with something of that careless indifference with which a spoiled child treats the wishes of a foolish and doting grandfather, and even to enter his hallowed courts or bow in secret worship with less of humility, reverence and true piety than that with which the Catholic bends before the virgin mother, or the pagan sacrifices to his gods of wood and stone.

God is spirit. May it be one of the results of our work and association together this year that the great God-spirit shall mean more to us in our daily thought and act; that he shall become a larger element in our theology, make out a more conspicuous factor in our plans and hopes for the life now and the life to come, be the deep basal note undergirding all the diversified harmony of our lives, the great holy gracious Presence pervading all our experience, urging us to duty, sweetening our lives, hallowing our worship.

III

The Nerve of Religious Sensation.

The Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord.
—Prov. xx:27.

BURNING it may be, or may not be; but it is candle. Able to shine; constructed to shine; but not a light until it has been lighted—the candle of the Lord. All that Solomon, therefore, says here of man's spirit is that it is part of us, and able to produce flame when it has been touched with flame: simply a candle. It is a special capacity we have for feeling, appreciating, and responding to divine things—the candle of the Lord. It is the point in us where the divine reaches and touches us, and affects us; the window in us that looks toward the quarter whence heavenly suggestions and communications flow down to us. Sound affects the ear; light, the eye; the spirit is the nerve of religious sensation. It is constitutional, therefore, not an affix; not wrought by sanctification, nor by conversion, nor even by education. It is in man, and of him. It is there as soon as the man is there. It is as much constituent of him as his hand, tibia, or knee-joint.

Man is a bundle of adaptations. We stand, by birth, in relationship with all kinds of things. Everything outside has a little office in us where it transacts its own special line of business; a visual lobby, where light makes up its accounts; an aural, where sound conducts its negotiations; a logical, where reasons, arguments, etc., get accommodated; a moral, where motives and behaviors are received and sorted; and close by the side of that, an inner cabinet where more distant communications and dispatches can be taken in, noted, and filed, called by us generally the religious sense, by Solomon the spirit of man which is the candle of the Lord.

There are some advantages in conceiving of these several lobbies and offices as being all of them ranged on the same floor, and in thinking of the religious sense as being, equally with the intellectual, æsthetic, or physical, purely a constitutional matter. The religious sense is only the faculty which all men have, in varying degree, of appreciating religious and divine things, and does not determine with certainty, in any instance, whether we are ourselves religious, or have made any considerable attainments personally in holiness and the knowledge of God. We could not be holy without the instinct, but the instinct does not insure our being holy; and a candle may stand all day long and all night long without emitting one flash of that light which it is in constitutional preparation to emit.

There is in this respect no difference between the religious instinct and other of our instincts. For example: Mathematics is the science of quantity. Now, a man may have naturally a keen appreciation of quantity, without that appreciation having been so taught and trained as to make him practically capable of mathematical results. A person may be endowed with the power of thinking closely and rapidly, and yet the circumstances of his case may be such as to prevent his ever becoming a scholar. Scholarship is impossible without the intellectual appreciation, and yet the intellectual appreciation will not guarantee the scholarship. It is quite like this to say that a man may have a sense of beauty and a taste for painting, without his ever becoming a painter. You may be musical without being a musician. So all men have a conscience; but conscience does not insure conscientiousness. Seneca was a moralist without being moral; and there are a great many more acorns than there are oaks.

This, then, familiarizes us with the practical thought that the religious sense forms part of each man's original outfit. And it is this religious sense that affords to the religious teacher something to which he can address his appeal. It gives the teacher and the preacher something with which to start. It obviates all necessity for apologizing, when we confront a congregation and discuss before it religious themes, and make allusion to God, soul,

and immortality. Speaker and hearer come into quick relation. There is not one of us but has in his nature a chord that is set vibrating when such matters are touched. We came into life with a little apartment all furnished for the transaction of just such business. No time needs to be spent in settling preliminaries. It never occurs to us that there is any person in whom such a thing as a religious instinct needs to be planted. Instincts are not a thing that can be planted. There is no going back of a man's dowry and supplementing his original make with a wing or an annex. It is out of the question to build off of a man's constitutional foundations. You cannot talk with me about a matter that my vocabulary has no words for and my mind or heart no sense or appreciation of.

Even atheists, if there are such things, would have no permanent interest in the discussion or denial of a God that in nowise answered to some inner sense of their own. It never occurs to us to kick consecutively at nothing—that is to say, if we are convinced that it is nothing. If a man is blind, and was born blind, it would be inconceivable that he should indulge in protracted argument against his neighbor's conviction of light and experience of color. All he could say to his neighbor would be, "When you discourse upon light and color, I don't know anything what you are talking about; I have nothing in me that answers to it; I have no experi-

ence that reads a meaning into your words." So in regard to religious matters, it would be absolutely a pyschological impossibility for a man to stand up before an intelligent audience and expend brilliant rhetoric by the hour in denial of a matter that no inner sense of his own in any measure answered to. It would be inconceivable that a man destitute of an auditory nerve should take a hall here in New York, and gather an audience, and perpetrate reiterated philippics against the art and science of music, using with some accuracy the terms of musical science, talking about tone and pitch with some evident appreciation of what men with a sense of hearing mean by tone and pitch, and then you go away from that tirade with anything less than a conviction that the man was either playing deaf, or had at some time had an auditory nerve that was as good as anybody's. It is not possible for any man to talk at length or with effect about a matter that is to him an absolute nonentity. It would be like trying to partition space by lines of elaborate stone masonry, or splitting up vacuum into polished cubes.

This is not proving that religion is a fact; it is only proving that a man would not talk about religion at length, either *pro* or *contra*, would have no disposition to, and, more than that, would have no power to, unless he had a religious sense, unless he had a sense which religion, if it *were* a fact, would accurately answer to. So long as a man declaims

against light, you know that he is not very blind yet; so long as he takes pains to depreciate music, you are confident that he can hear a little at times; and so long as in his denial of God he can use with anything like accuracy or appreciation the terms and phrases in which you acknowledge God, you will be similiarly assured that he has at least a religious sense that is very much like your own.

And then the facility with which children can be approached in religious matters, even the younger ones, shows that religion is a matter of instinct, before it is a matter of education. It is possible that you have not reflected, all of you, on the incalculable difficulty you would encounter in giving a child religious instruction were there not already in the child the religious bent before the religious instruction began. You never could teach him anything in that line, or in any other, were there not something already in the child ready to your hand before ever the disciplinary process commenced. How would you set about to produce in your child an enjoyment of certain combinations of tones if there were not between the child and those tones an inborn congeniality that was already at work prior to anything like instruction on your part? The first, third and fifth of the musical scale together produce a pleasant impression upon the child's ear, without instruction. Now, if that chord would not produce a pleasant impression upon the child with-

out instruction, how would you go to work to make it produce a pleasant impression by means of instruction? Or, to use another illustration a little closer to our matter, you can teach a child that to do this thing is right; to do that thing is wrong. But what is the first step you would take to start in a child that moral sense of right and wrong that enables him to understand that certain things are proper, and other certain things improper? In other words, if a child did not come into the world with the rudiments of a conscience already formed, how would you go to work to create those rudiments after once he was in? And so of religion, which embraces still another class of facts and experiences. How would you proceed to make your child religious, prayerful, reverent toward God, if you did not find already in the child a chord that vibrated at the touch of religious story and appeal? So far from intellectual discipline having been the means of creating in the child a religious consciousness, it has often been the case, and in some of these families, I think, that the religious consciousness was fully abreast of the intellectual, and that when the intellectual discipline came, it found the religious experiences already there, and waiting for classification and designation, just as the dawn lies quite a little while in the east before ever the sundial has a chance to indicate the hour of the day; and just as little Samuel felt the Unseen Presence, and heard

his voice, before ever he knew enough to think of it as divine, and call it Lord.

This, too, grounds our faith in missionary work, and accounts for the large results which missionary devotion and enterprise have achieved in all ages and latitudes. The missionary never finds himself obliged to lay foundations. Man, as such, Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian, has religious foundations already in him. Wherever missionaries have gone it is found that an entering wedge in the shape of a religious consciousness has already been struck by nature into the solid ledge of human depravity. So far forth, the best saint and poorest devil stand *en rapport*. Even the foul spirit at Philippi called out after Paul, and the devils of Gergesa and Capernaum recognized Christ and confessed him to be the Holy One of God. Paul does not find the same sort of doctrinal conception in Lyconia as at Tarsus and Antioch, nor preach the same kind of sermon to the theologians of Judea as to the Stoics and Epicureans of Athens; but he presupposed in all men, without distinctions of nationality or civilization, a religious sense, and his appeal was made to it, and response came back to him from it. Modern missions proceed upon the same basis as apostolic, and because all men give tokens of a religious sense we are encouraged and constrained to expect that all kingdoms and peoples, families and tribes, will be ultimately subdued to religious power.

Now, this inborn religious sense is an easy argument for the existence of God. We have called this sense a window of the soul; and a window exists for the sake of something outside to which it may give admission. Things exist in couplets; one member of the couplet implies the other. You see a fence-post with a rail-hole in it, and immediately think of the rail. Thought flashes across from one to the other involuntarily. If you study the eye, with all its delicate arrangement of lenses, you are at once put upon thinking of the light with which it stands in such exquisite relations, and you feel sure there would have been no such eye had there been no light of which it was to serve as the organ. So the ear is more delicate and more multitudinous in its adjustments than the finest piano; but even if you knew nothing of its relations to sound, you would instantly and necessarily infer that there must be something outside of the ear to which those minute vibratory surfaces in the ear deftly respond. In all our investigation of these organs we start out with the presumption that no foolishness and no waste and no falsehood has been perpetrated in their structure. We have confidence in these organs, and in the relations to which they bear quiet testimony.

So of our intellectual faculties; under certain conditions they give us conclusions that we call truthful. We reason from the faculty upward, and conclude that there is such a thing as truth quite independent

of the faculty, and to which the faculty stands in constituted relation. Now, all the ground we have for supposing that there is such a thing as truth is what we get from that faculty, and the confidence we have in it. So of the right; we each of us believe that there is such a thing as the right, separate and apart from anything in the way of education or convention; but the only grounds of this assurance are what is given us in our own conscience. We trust the conscience, and so are convinced that there is such a thing as the right; that is all there is to it. It is in the same way that we become persuaded of beauty, natural beauty, artistic beauty. Our æsthetic sense deals with that matter, and tells us all we know about it, and we believe that there is such a thing as beauty simply because we trust our own æsthetic sense that gives to us the information.

Our assurance, in each of these instances, has been the confidence we have in ourselves, the conviction that, structurally, human nature is not a lie. Now it remains to ask why exception is taken in the case of the religious sense? We trust the æsthetic and the moral and the intellectual; we credit the eye, the ear, the nose—everything but just this; why not this? Why not just as confidently argue the divine from the religious sense as the beautiful from the æsthetic sense? History is quite as full of it, profane as well as sacred; our lives are fully as replete with it; it asserts itself in us at quite as early

an age; is as universal in its prevalence; and even those who are most pronounced, persistent, and blatant in their defamation of religion depend for their defamatory genius upon the very aid that this selfsame sense ministers to them, and so are like Rachel, who, the instant she was denying the theft, was sitting in her own tent upon the very idols that she had filched from out her father's house.

But that is not all there is to it. Questioning one sense is like stepping on quicksand; you may be willing to sink a little way, but when you commence settling, the likelihood is that you will not stop settling till you reach the bottom. "Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus." Human nature is one. If it is faithless at one point, you have no guarantee that it is not a liar at every other point. If it is not to be relied upon in its testimony as to divine things, the ground is all taken away from underneath the confidence with which you regard its testimony as to things moral, æsthetic, and scientific. Your assurance of beauty, truth, and even of a sun in the sky, depends upon precisely that same confidence in the structural truthfulness of your own constitution that your assurance of a God does. There is the same opportunity for agnosticism to slip in between your eye and the sun as there is between your spirit and the Son of Righteousness. The whole building, and everything on the roof fell when Samson had broken it in one of its supports. There is a kind of

modesty about agnosticism that wins our regard, were it not that in the arbitrary way in which it selects what we may know and what we may not, there is a degree of impudence that challenges our contempt. If we cannot trust our religious sense, and keep the faith we have in our religion, then, in order to be consistent, we shall have gradually to withdraw our confidence from the other senses, and yield up the faith we have in science, ethics, and æsthetics.

If it should happen that I am addressing any man who has drifted into the fogs of agnosticism, let me say to you that the fundamental question you have to put to yourself is not whether God is knowable, but whether our common nature is one that is to be trusted. If it is *not*, then *all* of its testimonies are discredited, and you lose your religion and your science at the same time. If it *is* to be trusted, then all its testimonies are accredited, and you save your science and go on with your faith, your hope, and your worship.

And now let me say as a concluding thought, that the possession of this religious instinct puts us upon the track of a very simple and practical duty. It is true the possession of that instinct does not make us holy, but whether we become holy or not will depend mostly upon how we treat that instinct, and upon whether we repress and smother it or give it free chance of unfolding. Probably there is no unbeliever here but that, if he would give such relig-

ious impulses as are in him opportunity to enlarge themselves, and would gather about those impulses all such influences as would conduce to promote that enlargement, would soon find himself overmastered by them, and the surrender of himself to his Heavenly Father be both easy and necessary. And this is one particular object of each recurring Sunday service: it is to feed and nurture and quicken to a little stronger life still the tendencies religionward, that do make their presence and their unfoldings felt even in the hearts of them that are not quite ready yet to confess even to themselves that there is something lying forward of them that is more than anything to which they have yet reached. The plant life, you know, goes quietly along with its growing, even before it has quite detached itself from the seed, and pricked up through the soil into the air, and shown a green leaf outside. And it is sometimes the case, when a man is steadily yielding himself to the gentle pressure of gospel truth upon him, and is letting these impulses be warmed and moistened by that truth, that he feels his opposition relaxing, and himself little by little, succumbing even before the consummating act, and consciousness of surrender is completely reached; for it is not in the world at large alone, but in each individual heart, that the truth of God works with the quietness and gradualness of leaven.

Now, there are two things that, under the circum-

stances are to be demanded; the first demand is upon the preacher, that he keep the religious sense of the unconverted ones among his hearers steadily in view; that he have something always that shall minister to that sense and promote in the hearer the consciousness of being a religious creature, with relations to things eternal and divine; that he bring suitable truth to him with all possible closeness, never forgetting that this religious impulse in his unrepentant hearer is not a thing to be dealt with harshly, imperatively, and scoldingly, but rather as the florist deals with the little germinating seed, who is never angry with it for growing so slowly, but deems it rather a thing to be gently nurtured than upbraided, and patiently fostered than petulantly driven and compelled.

The other demand, and a very proper one, I am sure you will allow, is upon the unconverted hearer himself: that he hold himself, quietly, steadily, and yieldingly, under all those influences that seem adapted to expand that germ of religious consciousness that is in him. You know how, if a man desires to become a painter, he not simply seizes the brush himself and learns to paint by painting, but is careful to come into association with the products of genius in others, that his own art consciousness may be stimulated, the possibilities of his nature be fulfilled, and his own appreciations of beauty brought to fullest tension.

If a reply to this effect were to come back from any hearer, viz: "I would like to become a Christian but for some reason these matters do not take a strong, deep, hold of me; I don't believe I have any religious sense," two things are to be said in answer: In the first place, the mere desire to stand in different relations with God, the mere suspicion that there are any such relations in which you can stand, all of it proceeds from that same religious sense in you which you were just now denying.

The second thing to say is that it rests with you to take some sturdy measures to bring out this religious consciousness into greater force and fuller glow. I remember the case of a gentleman with some appreciation of natural beauty, who made a visit of a couple of weeks in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. He had heard much said of the incomparable beauty of the region, but expressed himself on his arrival as sadly disappointed. He was a man, however, who was always willing to find more than met him at the first glance, and so he spent the days of his stay out in the open air underneath the unparalleled blue of a Berkshire sky, with his eye continually bared and his heart unfolded to the last communication that dropped upon him from out the air, or that flowed down upon him from off the hills; and there never went out of Berk-

shire a truer lover of the charms of that beatific region. The things that are best have to be wooed before they are won.

You have attended the rendering of an oratorio that you had heard rapturously commended by appreciative musical critics, and you sat during the performance quietly wondering whether the stupidity was chargeable to the critics, who did enjoy it, or to you who did not. And yet here and there a strain stayed with you after it was all over; and, partly because it was the thing to do and partly because you had suspicions and presentiments that ran ahead of actual realization, you went again and again, and the thing grew in steady revelation before you, and before you were done with it you thought you heard the kingdom of God coming, and saw the ladder set up, and the angels ascending and descending upon it, and the heavens opened, and God speaking, and the air swarming with forty thousand angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest." You had not found the oratorio; the oratorio had found you, and waked your soul up, and set it singing in language it had never learned. Or, to change the illustration, you have gone into the cathedral at Antwerp, and seated yourself before Rubens's "Descent from the Cross." Your first impression very likely was what a morbid amount of bloody anatomy the gross Fleming succeeded in throwing upon a few feet

of canvas. And your first visit was disappointing; but something in the picture, answering to something in you, brought you back again, and you renewed your study, and began, little by little, to cease looking *at* it, and commenced looking *into* it, and little patches of disclosure began to come out all over it, as in any morning landscape strokes of brightness show themselves here and there upon the hills and in the tops of the trees before ever the shrubs and the meadows have been flushed; and the gold began to glitter in the quartz, and the jewel to show in the shell, and there was a meaning behind the faces, and the nail-holes in the hands and the feet brought a mist into your eyes, and the blood-drops became each a separate evangel, the pallid face read you the story of God's agony, Golgotha was removed to the North Sea, and a felt Presence in the old Belgic church sent you forth saddened and chastened. You had not found the artist; the artist had found you.

Dear friend, the application is simple. You have not to find God or his truth; let him and his truth find you. Let the Holy Spirit tap at the string in your heart that is waiting to vibrate. Quietly and patiently hold your spirit beneath the truth, and let it be touched and played upon. Never shake off the impression that earnest preaching, prayer and song form within you, but let it go on and strengthen and deepen, and have its entire way with you, and

work its whole effect; and your heart will assuredly grow large within you, and you will certainly find this holy Word of God breaking up into scenes more moving and pathetic than any Flemish canvas can yield, and springing forth into song more laden with pressure and appeal than any Messianic Oratorio.

IV

The Secret of Power.

The Kingdom of God is Not in Word, but in Power.—I Col. iv:20.

THE interest just now so deeply felt, not only by our own communion, but throughout the Church at large, in the matter of a worded statement of Christian truth, suggests the general inquiry: What part is it that a statement of truth, be it an uninspired one, or an inspired one, really plays in the great matter of Christian being and Christian living? Are words the core of the matter? or what are they? What *is* the pith of this that we call Christianity?

It seems like threshing over old wheat to go back to a question so elementary. It would be thought puerile for a mathematician, standing before a body of mathematicians, to come back on to primary ground and make an argument about the *nature* of mathematics. The cases, however, are hardly parallel. It is an observed fact with regard to all religions that they tend, in course of time, to part with much of their originary character, and to make a

change of base; and this change we can say, in a general way, is not a change for the better. It is not the coarsest ingredients that are generally eliminated from a religion, but the finest. Nothing is made more clear by the comparative study of religions than that religions deteriorate. If men are not brought up to a level with their religion, their religion they will bring down to a level with themselves. The truest, deepest things in any system impose a tax upon us, assert an expensive imperialism over us. This makes them irksome, and we go quietly about to devise some means by which, without throwing our religion overboard bodily, we can evade it in those respects wherein it makes inconvenient demands upon us. In that way the original material is being steadily replaced by that of an inferior grain. The average Mohammedan to-day is not nearly so good a man as Mahomet was. Judaism, in the time of our Lord, bore almost no resemblance to the character of Moses. In every case, the further you trace the current back and up toward its fountain head the clearer and more sparkling you find its waters to be.

And Christianity is no slightest exception to that rule. The tendency has always been steadily to slip away from that in the system that is axial; from its deepest realities to those that are shallower, and from its shallower realities to its destitute formalities, till one, without any conscious abandon-

ment of the faith, at last comes to the point where really he is no longer held by any vital and essential ingredient of the faith. So that, as long as preaching is necessary, it will always be in point, and always requisite, to discuss, even in the presence of Christians, the question, what is Christianity? Not for the purpose of arriving at the current consensus of opinion about it, but only to the end of getting nearer to the fountain head of the stream, and striking the stream at a point where its waters have not yet become mixed with philosophy or muddied by sin. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. And we, too, shall imitate the example of the Apostle in this verse, in trying to show what Christianity in its essence *is* by putting it in as distinct contrast as possible with one of the things that it is *not*: not word, but power; and "word" here we shall interpret broadly to cover the whole area of stated truth, whether that statement were made by Moses or the Lord, by St. Paul or Calvin, early or late, inspired or uninspired.

God has put truth into word, and so given us a Bible, for the purpose of making the divine a practical working factor inside each man's own individual life; not taking the "divine," though, in the sense of a philosophical tenet, a theological credo, or an ethical model; but taking the divine in its very presence, power, personality, and pressure so that by virtue of it we become organs of God, and young

incarnations. A man is not at his best, indeed he is not a man fully and fairly, till he is an inspired man, and until his own energies gain their final touch of effectiveness through the power of God working within him to will and to do of the divine good pleasure.

Inspiration, instead of being a lost art, is only beginning to be a discovered art. By limiting the term to the production of a volume of Scripture, we have cramped the true sphere of inspiration, and elbowed it into a corner, instead of frankly recognizing it as an atmosphere diffused through every chamber of Christian life and experience. And the result of such elbowing is evident. As soon as inspiration is once thought of as limited to the divine assistance by which, long time ago, a few men wrote the Bible, then, when that writing has been finished, and the sacred cannon closed, inspiration instantly drops into the character of a relic, a holy curiosity, as much to be remanded to the museum as meteoric iron in the sphere of the mineral, or megatheria in that of the biological. On the contrary, inspiration is a permanent constituent of the entire matter; only in one case it covers the Spirit of God going forth into the forms of lettered truth through the mind and hand of Jeremiah or of St. John; in another case it covers the Spirit of God going forth into forms of thought, feeling, purpose, and power through the personal instrumentality of such an

one as Abraham, David, Thomas à Kempis, Wesley, or any of us whose heart is so keyed to the mind of God as to be able to vibrate with the tones of his Spirit; like the æolian harp which is so delicately strung as to tremble melodiously in the presence of the great spirit of music that lurks inaudible in the air. Inspired power to write a divine Bible; inspired power to live a divine life; inspired power to conceive or achieve a divine purpose—each of them is as a separate colored ray that issues into the air after its passage through the prism of the human spirit; but one of these just as much as another sprung out of the original white beam of the Spirit of God.

To be a Christian, then, I say, is to live with a divine life; and to secure that result is the object which God had in giving to us a book—an instrument, therefore, whose prime value lies only in its competency to contribute to the realization and maintenance in men of the Spirit of God as the law and the material of life.

Men early broke away from God; tried to become human animals only; to keep the casket and to put the jewel at the pawnbroker's; hid behind the trees in the garden—a picture six thousand years old, but as true and fresh as when first painted; tried to live a life, not that had no idea of God in it, but that had no God in it, which is another matter. Revelation began then, and, under one form or another,

has continued until this morning, with the intent of reconnecting that which by sin had become disconnected; to complete the circuit, so that man's heart shall flash with God's light and beat with God's life, become a vivid crumb of incarnation—each man competent to become spiritually leafy, flowery, and fruity because abiding in the divine vine; every man a true live branch of God; a son of God because born of God; enshrining a spark of God's life; a particular avatar. These broken sentences are only an attempt to think at the level of God's thought as Christ has stated it, and as some of Christs's men and women have tried to live it—yes, and have succeeded in living it. We are going to get along vastly better, quarrel a great deal less with ourselves and a great deal less with other people, if we let Christianity mean a great deal to us than if we let it mean only an easy little. It will never make much of us unless we make much of it.

God's desire and design being, then, to become in men a governing and actuating presence, the Bible is a record of some of the attempts that he has made to accomplish that design—attempts that have varied greatly according to the circumstances of the diversified peoples with whom he has had to deal, and the altered times during which his efforts to that end have been prosecuted. Such an appreciation of the case on our part involves in it very distinct convictions as to the unequal value of different portions

of the Bible, considered as a storehouse of present spiritual pabulum. We believe in the Old Testament. And not only that, we believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament—meaning by inspiration exactly what St. Peter meant when he said that it was the production of holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But, granting all of that, because the Book of Leviticus, for example, was inspired, it does not necessarily follow that we, and the children in our homes and Sunday Schools to-day, cannot be more nutritiously employed than in the attempt to masticate and digest the Book of Leviticus.

We are seeking to have established and maintained, in ourselves and in our children, the Divine Spirit as the controlling principle of life; and because the way of accomplishing this, narrated in Leviticus, was good for the Hebrews three thousand five hundred years ago, it does not follow that it is the thing for us to-day. Even things that God makes wear out; even institutions that he originates may have only a temporary existence; and even Scripture, that his own Spirit has inspired, may possess only a provisional value. God inspired the architecture of the ark; but even if we had the ark back again, and old Noah to captain it, and Shem as first mate, it would stand no chance beside a Cunarder; and people who believe that the ark's build and proportions were divinely prescribed

would be as shy about going aboard of her as anybody else; and their shyness would be perfectly consistent with an intelligent faith in that inspiration.

The Holy Spirit is not dated, but the particular forms into which that Spirit throws itself bear marks both of time and locality. We read the Old Testament at every Sabbath service, morning and evening; but, as has been distinctly stated, the prime purpose of such selection is to open wide the door for a New Testament selection to follow it. We gain a wealthier sense of the new covenant by prefacing it with samplings from the old covenant which it has displaced. To this end the imprecatory psalms make a capital prelude to our Lord's prayer of intercession; and the presentiments of Isaiah bring out in only more impressive relief the full-blossomed consciousness of St. John and St. Paul. The two Testaments are pertinent to distinct times, and are not in the same way relevant to all times; and we confuse things when we treat them as though they were. If now (as is the custom in a good many of our Sunday schools)—if now six months of the Sunday school year be devoted to the Old Testament by itself, and the other six months to the New Testament, the only impression that is possible to be left upon the mind of either the young or the adult pupils is that, no matter where in the Bible a thing occurs, no matter when a thing was written or

who wrote it, it is all of it equally relevant to the matter of Christian character and life.

The Old Testament is inspired narrative of the world's first steps in holiness, and some of those steps exceedingly short and shambling, and if you crowd back either yourselves or your children or your pupils on to those records, and try to make them a true constituent part of to-day's nurture, you are only trying to make people walk in twilight after the sun is risen; you are only keeping them thumbing the primer after they are competent to read more difficult sentences that are loaded with a riper, richer meaning.

Without doubt the Old Testament is the foundation of the New. So the basement of your house, with its encompassing masonry, makes out the foundation of the stories above; but that is not a reason why you should spend twelve hours every day down cellar. Certainly the Old Testament has a gospel reference and is full of anticipatory suggestion; and if it can be taught in a way to exhibit that character, there is a great deal to be said for it. But even that is surveying the gospel through presentiments that are hundreds and in some instances thousands of years old; and any glorious prospect that you are permitted to stand in the immediate presence of, you are not going to retreat from fifty or a hundred miles for the purpose of

surveying it through a telescope, even though that telescope were the handiwork of God himself.

I appreciate how many cleavage lines there are in all this into which shafts of criticism can be thrust. The only thing in it all that I care to stand for is that the Old Testament is not the latest thing out. What we want is the last dispatch. Monday's paper is not news after Tuesday's paper is on the street. Better let the Old Testament entirely alone than handle it in such a way as to leave the impression that old and new are all of one piece, and that piece of a homogeneous texture. God made Mosaism pure and simple, and God made Gospel pure and simple; but he never made a conglomerate of the two, as is done by preachers and Sunday School teachers every Sabbath of the year. No man was ever more thoroughly steeped in Judaism than was St. Paul before his conversion; but the secret of St. Paul's hold upon his own times and all the centuries since was that in his conversion he was wholly taken possession of by the spirit of the new covenant of faith, and, in consequence, the old covenant of works was driven out of him as a dead thing; and wherever you find a man all over engrossed with the single idea of an immanent Christ, and all over mastered by the undivided imperialism of an immanent Christ, you get some of St. Paul back again, and little patches of Luther and

the German Reformation springing up all around him. "The law," said St. Paul, "is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," and adds that when we get to Christ we don't want any more schoolmaster. To be a Christian is not simply to behave with propriety; it is to live after the power of a divinely quickened and renewed life; and specific statutes and carnal ordinances are not even tangent to the genius of the matter, though scratched on granite by the very finger of God.

The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. So much for the old word; now a little about the new—what we call the gospel.

Recognizing the imperialism of the Divine Spirit working in us as the quintessence of the entire matter will be likely to shift a little the angle at which even New Testament Scripture stands to us. It is very difficult to recover from the notion and the superstition that a written Bible is some how the very substance of our holy religion, and that the written New Testament is the gospel. We may have read a thousand times those words of St. Paul in the First of Romans, "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation," without realizing that, when he stated that, the gospel was entirely without written documents.

It is almost as difficult for us to break loose from the fascination of the letter as it was for the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of Jesus. In his epistle to

the Corinthians the Apostle writes: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;" and then we go about imagining that it was only the "letter," in its connection with the *old* covenant that had in it such possibilities of peril. We set up a truth, enunciate it or *letter* it as definitely as we can, line it as sharply as we know how, and then, because the truth happens to have been taken from the right hand instead of the left hand of the apocrypha, suppose that it is not a case of "letter" at all, but of "spirit," as though the question were only which covenant it came from, and not whether it had been tied up into a hard knot of hempen sentence.

The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power; it may be a word in Chronicles or a word in the record of St. John; word is not kingdom, power is kingdom. Words, even the words of the Lord are only shapes out into which his spirit runs and tries to give token of its presence and might. The written pages from Matthew to Revelation did not make Christianity; Christianity made the written pages from Matthew to Revelation. Words are the accident of the matter. Christ wrote nothing, and gave no orders to his disciples to write anything. It is easier to carry a book around in our pocket than it is to carry God's Spirit around in our life, and that explains a good deal of the bookishness of the entire business. But gospel, all shifts aside, is

power. Gospel, all shifts aside, is life, divine life. Jesus Christ is the gospel. "I am the way; I am the truth; I am the life; I am the whole thing," said he; and to-day, this morning, here in this church, to be a Christian is not to know a book, but to be knit into the Son of God. There was no book in St. John's piety, or in St. Peter's or in St. Paul's. I know *whom* I have believed," not *what* I have believed.

This of course is not to recommend the disuse of the Christian Scriptures. They subserve a necessary purpose. They are highway over which men are to be led to Christ—Christ who is the same presence and certain power to-day that he was when he trod the streets of Jerusalem and the country roads of Galilee. The error does not lie in using the written records as an instrument, but in treating them as a finality—in treating them as a substitute for Christ; a something to be used because we can do nothing better; a record of what Christ used to do when he was here, and to be made much of because we can do nothing better; a record of what Christ used to do when he was here, and to be made much of because he is gone and isn't doing anything here now. Whether we have ever thought that all out in words or not, the presence of that idea in the air lies all about us as a stupefying anodyne. We are in danger of trying to live on an inspired description of Christ and a verbal photograph of him in-

stead of succeeding in living on Christ. There is a Bible worship which is idolatry, and puts a written image in Christ's stead, making the Bible an idol of the Lord instead of an open door conducting to his presence.

We cannot live on a history—even an inspired history. We cannot browse on antiquity and grow fat—even a divine antiquity. Christ told his disciples that it was expedient for them that he go away; to their advantage that he go away, because he would send his spirit instead. Instead of taking warm and obedient hold upon the divine presence which he said he would send, there is a good deal of likelihood that we shall go no further than to take hold upon the written scriptures which he never said anything about sending. The Apostle's creed, which we so often repeat, says, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," but in that creed there is not one word from beginning to end about the Holy Scriptures. Let it be said again that our criticism is not against the Scriptures, but against putting the Scriptures in the place of the Lord, as though they were the best thing we could have, and the only thing really that has survived from him to our own generation.

This is a thoughtful age; men are brainy; all about us there is a passion for new ideas; but our most urgent necessity is not of idea, but of power: what we need most is not schooling, but baptism.

The real gospel that is in the world to-day is not the Scriptures, but Christ and them that are alive in him. We are not quite arrived at the domain of what deserves to be called faith till we are passed over from the region of idea into that of power. Faith is not assent to any theory of Scripture, or to anything that Scripture contains, or to all that it contains. Faith is not so much a condition wherein we hold *to* something or somebody as that in which we are held *by* something or somebody. It is not holding a doctrine, but being held by a person. The magnetized filings stick to the steel not because they try so hard to stick, but because the steel has captured them.

No man has got to the earnest part of the matter, nor to the safe part of it, till he has found out for himself that Christianity does not consist in holding religious opinions that he can let go of, but in being held in the strong embrace of God, who has no intention of letting go of *him*. Ideas wear out and lose their grip; no man is proof against dying an agnostic or an atheist till he has been pentecosted. A child's faith as toward his mother is not faith that what his mother says is true: it is faith in his mother; the hiding of himself in the bundle of one life that enwraps them both, so that he lives in the sweep of her inspiration, and grows up toward manhood by the appropriation of personal vigor, wisdom, and sweetness hourly made over to him from

her. And that is cast in the same mold as gospel faith, which is as a cord by which the living Christ holds the living believer to himself. It is not a rope of idea, nor a shred of sentiment, nor a strand of aspiration, but it is an ingraft by which we become hid with Christ in God, so that our deeds become divine apocalypse and our lives God's blossoms.

The time come speedily, O God, when that type of Christianity shall prevail among us; when we shall give over quibbling about the small matters of it all; when words shall be understood by us to be but the types of realities; when formula and ceremonial shall be respected as being but the shadow of thy form and the fringe of thy garment; when even the Holy Word shall be reverenced as being no more than the suggestion of thy glory and the outer court of thy presence; our faith be not a holding to things, nor even a holding to thee, but a *being held by thee*, so that alike in inward thought and outward act we shall be under thy dominance, our lives the small reflection of thine, and so instinct with the eternal Spirit of Christ that *our* presence, because thou art in it, shall tell upon men divinely, and *our* touch, because thou art in it, become to them the conveyance of Gospel light, liberty, and life!

V

The Garden of the Lord.

And Adam and His Wife Hid Themselves from the Presence of the Lord God Amongst the Trees of the Garden.—Genesis iii:8.

THE garden of the Lord concealed from Adam and Eve the Lord of the garden. Your own minds, I am sure, will have a quick presentiment of what that foreshadows, and of the truth, half concealed, and half told, in this antique imagery. The subject is recent and relevant to the new world, although in our verse put upon canvas in colors that are Oriental. The garden of the Lord concealed from Adam and Eve the Lord of the garden. It became an instant question therefore either of more Lord or of less garden. The Lord himself chose between the alternatives, and out among the thorns and thistles the race began to evolve from the godlessness in which by the luxuriance and deliciousness of paradise they had first become involved.

This pictorial story is so true to *present* facts, it seems strange it should ever have been discredited as a just record of *original* facts. Like Janus, it looks both ways. The air was so full of verdure

that it turned blue into green and barred out the sky. God and Adam were on opposite sides of the trees. The creature swallowed the Creator. The gift rubbed out the Giver. God did not turn Adam out of paradise till Adam had turned God out. The luxury of the garden thronged the ground and loaded the air. Adam was incompetent to contain God and the garden at the same time. It is dangerous to be comfortable. Being so cosily and deliciously fixed cost Adam his piety and then his integrity. The story becomes, then, like a mirror made so many years ago that discrepant legends have gathered about its construction, yet if you look into the mirror it returns your face to you as fairly and faithfully as it did that of its manufacturer a millennium ago.

It is a long lesson to learn to be able to keep the garden of the Lord, and the Lord of the garden both. Adam stumbled over the lesson, and we, his remote progeny, are still conning and tussling with it. We hope to be able to get along in the new garden when it comes, with all the elegance of furnishing and deliciousness of fruition it may be garnished withal; but as yet conveniences are perilous; to be more than about so comfortable is hazardous; the tree easily becomes bigger than the Lord, and our problem is still that of the Hebrews—how we can enjoy the quails and at the same time be kept from leanness of soul. Adam was skuttled by the

devil of luxury, and swamped in the sea of his own felicities. "And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

Adam's felicities were of an innocent nature to be sure. It was not apples of Sodom, but God's own apples of knowledge that he tasted, and in the very thick of God's woods that he and God became separated from each other: which is one of the clever touches in the picture. It was a clear part of the painter's intent to have us understand that it was not poison, but good, wholesome food that ruined Adam; and that it was not one of his own wicked inventions, but God's own garden-verdure and luxuriance that, practically, emptied Eden of the divine nearness and presence. So closely did Adam cleave to it that the Maker's own tree concealed from him the tree's own Maker. There is no blessing so blessed that the unilluminated side of it will not fall off and darken down into a curse. All the planets that dance even about the sun are black on their off side. The better a thing is, the more harm it is capable of doing. The pillar of cloud differed from the pillar of fire not in identity but in circumstance. Security is prolific in peril, and the best of things may be mother to bad effects. So that when we are trying to avoid Adam's mistakes, in our own little paradise, we shall need not only to keep one eye on the serpent that has crawled in from without, but

also to deal very warily with the trees that God has himself planted in the garden, and the apples, even the apples of wisdom and the apples of life, that God's own fingers have hung upon their branches.

It is often a matter of wonderment with us that God allows his people, so many of them, to be so distressed. If, indeed, He is an omnipotent and effectionate Father, why is it that he does not create about us gardens of comfort and luxuriance, instead of pasturing us upon wildernesses characteristic for nothing so much as their barrenness? A lesson that I learn more of almost every day is, how much of anguish there is in human lives, either expressed, or more likely undivulged, or more likely still, undivulgeable. My friends, I judge from experience, from observation, and from the tenor of scripture, that we have even now more comfort than we can get along with to advantage. There comes to me quite frequently from the distressed and bereaved the request to be remembered in the prayers of God's people. I confess to you frankly that I believe those of us who are not afflicted need vastly more praying for than those who are. Sometime we are going to thank God more fervently for what have been our subtractions, than we now do for our additions, and learn to read every cross as a plus sign. More grace is needed to keep a prosperous man erect than one who is unprospered. It has occurred over and over again, just in the midst of this congregation, during

the last half dozen years, that a man has had to be driven out of his garden into a sand lot and a thistlefield before he could recover his manhood and find his God again.

Like the Hebrews, we pray for quails and very likely get them, and along with them get something we did not pray for, and something, too, that is a good deal harder to lose than quails are to catch. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," which is another way of saying that when the garden has become so packed with trees, and the air so clustered with blossoms as to keep the daylight from sifting in, he cuts a swath through the midst of the garden, that we may be reminded again that there is a sky as well as a ground, and that down upon some of the verdure that remains, rifts may be opened through which the heavenly light shall touch and play. Am I mistaken in thinking that there are some garden-plots right in our midst that have grown up so rich and rank that the very verdure has come to intervene and hide between the tenants of the garden and the Lord of the garden?

Thoughtful and devout minds have felt this, and have tried to escape the peril it involves; have sometimes done of themselves what Adam had done for him, exchanged their garden for a wilderness; voluntarily renouncing life's comforts and amenities. It is easy to satirize the absurdity of such renunciation; but whether it is absurd or not depends; de-

pends upon whether the luxuries are renounced because of the evil inherent in the luxuries, or because they embarrass our attainment of benefits that are of a still better and more necessary sort; just as we would pluck up roses growing in a cornfield, not out of disrespect for or misappreciation of the roses, but because they absorb that strength of the soil that needs to be diverted to the maturing of the grain. And I am sure we shall be agreed with one another in this, that at this present time, peculiarly, there is growing in the midst of the ranks of standing corn a profusion of roses, that however beauteously they may diversify the field of grain, are nevertheless sapping the vigor of the soil, and purchasing their own beauty at the expense of energy that ought to go to feed the blade, swell the ear, and round and color the full corn in the ear; and that the garden of the Lord has become so compact in its verdure and so luscious in its bloom and fruitage as to crowd the air and fill the light, and that from us, too, the progeny of Adam, the garden of the Lord is concealing the Lord of the garden.

Singular as may seem the statement, one of the greatest obstacles that Christianity has now to confront is civilization. It is brought as a charge against the Gospel that its power over men varies inversely with the civilizing results already wrought in their midst. There is a degree of truth in the charge. The same amount of evangelical work will

effect more religious results in a Fiji than in a New Yorker. A given amount of sowing will issue in larger harvests below 14th Street than it will above. The church is working its most rapid results on heathen soil. Foreign missionary work is yielding the best dividends in proportion to the amount of money invested. To a degree, then, the charge can be sustained, although there is nothing new or fresh in the charge and it involves no originality on the part of the plaintiff. It is all in the Book. Christianity is doing in this century all that it claimed a competency to do in the first century. It is in fact in New York just what it was in promise in Jerusalem. Jesus worked almost uniformly at the mud-sills of society, endured the Sanhedrim, but courted the sinners and reclaimed the harlots. He civilized people, but avoided civilized people.

Degradation is more accessible than respectability; that is taught by the words of Christ and his apostles and by the example of their ministry. The Church has from the beginning been recruited first of all from the ranks of the unlettered, the unmoneyed and the ignoble. The Christian Church is in this respect like a tree, that its roots are in the ground (more or less soiled therefore). When Paul wrote that "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," he allows the substance of the objection, and concedes that those influences of blood, money, manners and let-

ters, rather indefinitely grouped under the term "civilization," are a hindrance to the Gospel and an embarrassment to the Holy Ghost. This, however, consists perfectly with another fact: that there is no force that yields civilization so readily and prolifically as Christianity does. Christianity is the mother of the best civilization, but like David, raises up a foe in her own house, and is in constant danger of being devoured by her own offspring. The very results yielded by Christianity, in the shape of respectability, and wealth, and power, and culture, and elegant refinements, come in to obscure the root itself out from which they are sprung. It is like a tree shaded and hindered by its own verdure. It is like the sun waking up the mists in the morning; its beams like so many nimble fingers, weaving a veil to hang across the face of the sun, till it defeats its brightness by its own shining. We become indifferent to the cause in our engrossment with its effects, and the old fact becomes true again, that the garden of the Lord conceals from us the Lord of the garden.

One of the trees behind which the face of the Lord becomes hidden from us is the tree of knowledge. We shall mention only two or three of these briefly; but there is propriety in mentioning that first. It is the first historic instance wherein a good thing demonstrated its capacity for mischief. It is the first card laid down by Satan in his long game of

trying to ruin men by the seductions of civilization. The tree was of God's planting to be sure, and knowledge is no doubt good; but from the first the devil has been a learned devil, and has posed as the patron of erudition. "Eat of the fruit of the tree," he said, "and ye shall become as gods." That knowledge puffeth up," was known by Satan before it was stated by Paul. Knowledge is the fruit of the tree that stood in the very midst of the blessed garden; but knowledge is regularly accompanied by its shadow in the shape of a consciousness of knowledge; and consciousness of knowledge is on the negative side of know-nothingism.

Consciousness of knowledge is more stultifying than ignorance, and is essentially atheistic; atheistic in this sense: that it converts present cognitions into a barrier that blocks the entrance of the heavenly light and thwarts the Holy Ghost. The tree grew in God's garden; so our schools have been planted and fostered by the Christian Church. Still the multitudinousness of books, ideas, theories and philosophies, out into which the schools have blossomed, tends to work that intellectual complacency, and that conceit of knowledge, which blurs every heavenly vision, discredits the wisdom that is from above, and routs the Redeemer. "Not many wise men after the flesh are called." Athens bent to the Gospel with the condescending courtesy usual to elegant learning. The arrow aimed at the sun ends at

last by pricking into the dirt. A college may be christened with Christian baptism only to become at length a smithy for the forging of spears to pierce afresh the side of the Crucified. Our science mothered by the Church, easily grows supercilious and blatant and turns matricide. Even the sun lifts the mist that befogs the sun. One single electric light out here on Madison Square extinguishes the stars, and the shining of the low-lying moon snuffs out all the constellations of the firmament. The garden of the Lord grows up at length into such prodigality of leaf and flower as to conceal the Lord of the garden.

Another tree behind which the face of the Lord becomes hidden from us is that of affluence. There is an advantage in distinctly recognizing that as being likewise indigenous to paradisaic soil. Even Scripture takes pains to show its respect for men that are in comfortable possessions and repeatedly gives us detailed inventory of their assets. "Money answereth all things." The first African convert, Luke is interested to tell us, was chancellor of the Queen's exchequer. It seemed to gratify Luke to think how much money the Ethiopian was in the habit of handling. Even the dead body of our Lord was indebted to the rich Arimathean for a tomb to be buried in. It was not necessary for Matthew to say of him that he was a *rich* man of Arimathea, but he took an evident pleasure in it,

and the Holy Spirit that inspired him found nothing in the way of it.

And there is no soil so fitting to foster *this* growth also, as Christian soil. In no company of a thousand people brought together outside of Gospel ground could you find so many men whose property counts up among the high figures as you can in the particular assembly that gathers, for example, in this particular church Sunday by Sunday. The tree of wealth verily like the tree of knowledge has its best rooting in the soil of paradise. We should no sooner think of speaking a disparaging word of money than we should of knowledge. But as knowledge trails behind it its shadow (as we have seen) so money is regularly attended by its shadow. Knowledge becomes conscious of itself and so atheizes. Wealth becomes conscious of itself and so atheizes. The sun lifts the mist that befogs the sun. It is not easy to become very learned without getting lost in the world of our own erudition. It is not easy to become very rich without becoming lost in the world of our acquisition.

The Gospel has a hard stint to save either a philosopher or a millionaire. Money is just as holy a thing in one way as wisdom is in another. But it makes not the slightest difference how holy a thing is, if, like Adam, the Lord is on one side of it and you are on the other. And the more this consciousness of money is developed the more truly the man

becomes encased in a little world that is all his own, and the more impervious to any influences that bear upon him from without. The verdure becomes so thick that the sky gets rubbed out, and the tree so broad and massive that the Lord God shrinks into invisibility behind it. And although a tree in God's own garden, wealth operates still farther in the same direction by destroying sense of dependence upon the higher power. Animals are domesticated by hunger, and men religionized by bread-and-butter necessities. There is just a little incongruity in a man praying, "Give us this day our daily bread," when he is confident that he has already convertible assets ample to keep him in bread for a thousand years. Wealth induces a sense of sufficiency and of young almightiness that checkmates the Gospel and embarrasses the blessed Spirit. This, then, is another illustration of the way in which civilization, although the outcome of the Gospel, nevertheless naturally works back discouragingly upon the Gospel.

I mention only one other tree in God's garden, and that is the tree of respectability. More evidently, perhaps, than either of the others, it is the outcome of heavenly soil. The Gospel has always displayed a surpassing power in diffusing ideals of excellent behavior, in grappling with the coarser lusts of men, and taming them into habits of regularity and propriety. At the same time, when a man by the impact of the truth, or by the pressure of senti-

ment, or by the fear of consequences, but without having been interiorly and vitally renewed, has had just enough outward effect produced upon him to start in him an incipient and callow sense of goodness; such a man composes the very toughest material with which the Gospel has to contend. Such a little streak of conscious excellence when exposed to the convicting truth of God's Word, or power of God's Spirit, like a glittering rod pushed up into the electricity will convey off in silent serenity the most terrific bolt out of the sky that can be hurled against it.

I dread respectability more than I dread original sin. The devil of decency is more incorrigible than the devil of dirt. The hardest man in college to teach anything is a sophomore, because he knows just enough to tickle his vanity without knowing sufficient to appreciate the brilliant reach of his stupidity; which is precisely analogous to the class of people I have just now in mind; good enough to enjoy their goodness but neither quite good enough nor quite bad enough to know that the only hope for them is in being inwardly renewed and thoroughly born again. I would rather, as a minister of the Gospel, deal with a man that has no taint of decency about him, than to preach to one inwardly unrenewed but treated to an outward "wash" of elegant proprieties, what the Lord called whited sepulchres, whitewashed charnel-houses; and I am stating in my words

only what the Lord said in his words to the silver-plated Scribes and Pharisees, "The publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

These are three of the trees, then, Wisdom, Wealth and Decency, behind which we hide and lose the visibility of the Lord. Good, all of them, sprung from holy soil, but sufficient either of them to hide from us the face of the Almighty God when He is upon one side of them and we upon the other. In this way civilization, the first begotten and well-beloved child of Christianity, stands with poniard drawn to thrust into the bosom of its own mother.

I want to say only one closing word to the men and women here that are Christians. Whether, or not, current civilization is to be erased, and history started again in some new thorn-pasture and thistle-bed, beyond the cherubim and outside the gate and the flaming sword, God only knows. But you see our danger and you see our hope. The trees are growing up rank; the verdure is profuse; the air is clustered with blossom, but the Lord is in the garden; keep in the range of the Lord's eye. If you have money, bless God for it, but keep on God's side of it, not shrivel in the eclipse made by it when you hide on the off-side of it; and if you can't keep your money and your God both, let God take away your money before your money takes away your God. Pretty soon we shall lose our money anyway, and then we shall be poor indeed, standing up before the

great white throne with no money and no God either; no bankstocks and no corner-lots here and no mansion either in the new city on high.

The Great Lord save our civilization and save us from the power of our civilization; keep us where we can see His face and hear his voice in spite of the trees! But, at any rate, the Lord save our race and save our country, more trees or fewer; fill the air with his presence, shoot rays of light through the leaves and between the blossoms, our eye look steadily into his eye, and we, the tenants of the garden, walk evermore in obedient and loving fellowship with the blessed Lord of the garden!

VI

Unconscious Faith.

I Being in the Way, the Lord Led Me.—Genesis xxiv : 27.

ELIEZER had found Rebekah. Eliezer had had something to do with it. The Lord had had something to do with it. I being in the way, the Lord led me. God's providence and man's relations to it.

God's prevision and God's provision are matters which in this presence need no debate; they are with us settled facts, bedded in the body of our Christian faith. David says, in the twenty-third psalm, "He leadeth me;" and that voices Christian sentiment still and everywhere! "He leadeth me." It will be to our advantage if we can come closer to what is already our own faith in the matter, and if we can succeed in reducing that faith to a more helpful and working relation to daily straits and difficulties, for there is of course no use in a faith that we cannot use.

Nothing will then be more suitable or consistent with our theme, than to ask of thee, O Lord, in

whose hands are all our ways, and from whom are the preparations of the heart in man, that thou wilt go before us in all of our thinking, and guide us in all our searchings after the truth. We plead before thee thine own promise—"In all thy ways acknowledge me and I will direct thy paths." And thus established in the line of thy choice may we at the end of our study have it to say with thy servant by the side of the well in the city of Nahor—"I being in the way, the Lord led me."

I have heard it said that it is one of the effects of plowing that it puts the soil in such condition as that it draws towards the surface the moisture that has already been in the ground, but lying deeper down. That, I suspect, is quite akin to the effect produced upon us by much of our best preaching and Bible study, not that it actually increases our faith always, but that it operates to draw toward the surface and make matter of our own conscious experience the faith that has been already existing inwardly, an invisible basis of support, a subterranean fountain of supply.

Our globe lies unsuspectingly in the great open hand of its Creator; and with almost as little suspicion, a great deal of the time, our lives nestle in the large, open hand of our fatherly Provider. I have vast faith in men's unconscious faith in God and in his provident care. We certainly realize very imperfectly the religious instincts and impulses that

do quietly go on framing themselves together inside our minds, so laying the massive but unseen basis of much of our outward act and effort. It is only now and then that something transpires that shoots within us a sudden line of light, and gives us momentary glimpse of what is lying in our mind silently and working there stealthily; as a flash of lightning in the night-time outlines before us for a quick instant the form that is flitting past us in the darkness.

And this by no means holds of our religious instincts alone. We are not extemporizing a theory of unconscious faith to make good the deficiency of evident and realized faith. We are only asserting of the religious faculties what we can with entire confidence affirm and with perfect facility demonstrate of the rational faculties. There is no intellectual process pursued by us that does not conform to laws that we have not the wit to appreciate, and that does not involve instincts and considerations that we are not quick enough to see nor nimble enough to overtake. Our conclusions always imply more premise than we can put our hands on. Our conclusion may be valid, but it is very rarely safe to tell how we reached our conclusion. Thoughts creep in with a tread too velvety to be heard—flit through with a flash too swift to be counted. So simple a process, for example, as estimating with the eye the distance from us of the house across the street, involves visual adjustments and balancings, and complicated syllo-

gisms, that we have never suspected till we have once squarely questioned our estimates and attempted to get to the ground of them. The mind is full of facts and laws and movings that only occasionally and for an instant are seen by us under sunshine.

There is no end of illustrations that might be cited of the processes that go forward in our mind and heart determining and governing us, but of which, nevertheless, we are quite unconscious and unsuspicious. We are all of the time leaning upon supports without once thinking how much of our pressure we are really putting upon them till the support gives way or is removed. We may go through the day without once seeing the sun or thinking of it; yet from dawn to evening may not have had a thought which the sun's sheen did not brighten, nor an affection which its beauty did not intensify. We rarely hear the clock tick, but are startled when it *stops* ticking. "Blessings brighten as they take their flight," we say; which is a way of confessing that we may have our lives greatly beautified and comforted without the joy of them ever becoming in us a full and defined thought. You love your wife and children, and yet you may go down town in the morning and from nine o'clock until five not have one distinct thought of any member of your household, and that, too, without being in the least chargeable with disloyalty to the household. But if that wife and those

children should be removed from you, then in the midst of your employment you would soon discover how great a fact they had been in your life even in those hours when they had not been a definite object to your thought; something as the sunlight itself may not for hours at a time be a distinct object of regard with you, and yet has the power of clothing with brightness and grace all those objects that stand in the sunlight. The conscious facts of our inner life make out but a very small part of our inner life.

And to come a little closer to the matter immediately in hand; a little child is wondrously stayed and pacified by the presence with it or at least nearness to it of its own mother; and yet the child will go on contentedly with its toys quite a little apart from its mother, or even in a room adjoining that in which its mother is, provided the door be left open, and perhaps for an hour or more keep quietly busy about its play, till something startles it into an apprehension that mother may not be close by. Now the explanation of all that is very simple and instructive. It is not quite fair to say that the child had forgotten its mother; nor can we say with exactness that the child has had any thought of its mother; and yet it had all that time been stayed and quieted by its faith in its mother's nearness, a faith strong enough to keep it from disquiet and anxiety, and yet not so strong as to rise up in the child's mind to the precision of a distinct thought; a kind of walking in the

twilight which may be bright enough for us to be able to pick our steps with care and safety, and yet not so bright as to set us thinking at all of the sunken sun to whose presence behind the hills the evening twilight is all due.

That is what we mean by unconscious faith in God and in his provident care. It is like certain deep organ notes which are too positive to be called silence, but too unsubstantial to be called a tone; a diffusive breath, rather, which lies about among the chords, blending all in one close conspiracy of sweet sound. And most of our confidence in the leadings of God is of this unconscious kind. There is nothing to indicate that Eliezer in all his long journey out to Mesopotamia leaned in any other way upon the arm of God than did the child playing in the next room find support in the nearness of its mother. In this matter of faith in the wise and affectionate government of God I am confident we are all of us more religious and Christian than the sharp analysis of our thought at any given instant might lead us to infer. Love does not consist in the consciousness of our love, nor faith in the consciousness of faith. The sea draws toward the moon though its waters do not know it. The planets bend to the sun though revolving in profound unconsciousness of it. It is not the best part of our health that we know that our pulse is beating or know that the processes of respiration and digestion are steadily maintained. The

finest element in our loyalty to our friends is not that we tell them that we love them or even that we think as much in distinct and precise thought. Young lovers are all the time telling each other how much they love one another ; but as they grow older and love each other more they tell each other less. The most tell-tale thing about a boy's confidence in his father is not his telling him how much trust he has in him, but the unconscious working of his fingers as his little hand tries to get a snugger hold of his father's larger hand. So that we are not to estimate our own faith or that of others by the amount of verbal demonstration that we make or hear.

I am confident that in society generally and in the world at large there is to-day no instinct that works in men's minds with more constancy and power than just this confidence in a supreme and governing intelligence. It is the silent postulate that underlies our thinking ; it is the impalpable axiom that undergirds our purpose and our estimates. When the child creeps along to the open door, looks through and finds its mother gone, it utters a sharp cry, which shows the difference between unconscious faith and having nothing to put faith in. If it is the case that any one here has so little consciousness of a divine presence and guidance that he supposes that he is really getting along without God, and that there is none, were it possible for him to look through some open door and discover that there is in the next room

nothing answering to mother or father he would utter the same sharp cry because it would be the sudden removal of a support upon which all men, unconsciously at least, are leaning. And it is full of instruction just at this point, that while so many in our day are atheistically inclined, they stop as a rule at agnosticism.

And now you will see how perfectly our illustration of the next room explains the spirit and animus of agnosticism. Agnosticism shuts the door into the next room, but takes care not to drive out of the next room anybody that may be there. Agnosticism is atheism becoming a little irresolute and lonely already before its expurgated edition of the universe is complete. Agnosticism is philosophic attempts at irreligion compromising with the ineradicable exigencies of man's soul. But in matters of such moment compromise will not work. There are instances in which medium ground is no ground. A strait is not a sea but an avenue between two seas. The prodigal not lived, but waited, among the swine till he should conclude to go farther or go back. The husks of agnosticism grow on the watershed that slopes in one direction toward hell (hell on earth I mean), and in the other toward home. There are indications that the lost boy is thinking about his father.

And almost all of us know how easily our unconscious faith in the care and guidance of God is

aroused into a thoughtful and conscious faith. The plowshare readily brings the moisture to the surface. Elijah prayed as he came to the end of his journey and the evening gathered. Occasions do not make reverence nor create faith, but reveal it. Our Sunday, our church, reminds us from week to week of our forgotten confidence in God. We lean upon him all the week; on Sunday, even if on no other day, we review our faith and with a distinct thought and confidence yield ourselves again to the leadership of the good Shepherd. One prayer stirs in every pew the instincts of prayer. One song of thanksgiving becomes in a thousand hearts a hymn of praise. Our faith takes no vacation however our consciousness of it may. The still harp-strings lie full of music.

But as an instrument is improved by being played upon, so also the chords of our confidence in God by being touched come to yield a stronger, finer quality of confidence. So that our trust in the supreme wisdom gains from everything that reminds us of our trust. Hence the advantage of our Sundays and our churches. In our prayers we find our faith. Strong men who have been all the week long bound on the torturing rack of a fluctuating market come in here and join in the doxology. The doxology is itself a confession of faith set to music: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow,"—a confession of God and of his beneficent providence; and

in that confession of faith men find their faith once more. In the same way they come in and join in the Lord's prayer, which is also a creed as well as a prayer, and withal they have been straining every nerve all the week long to meet perhaps the needs of their own life and their family, they bow in the house of God and say, "Give us this day our daily bread." And in the confession of their faith they find their faith, and feel their faith; heaven is nearer, God means more, men's ways are divinely shaped. "He leadeth me."

It is easy to believe, in the filled sanctuary and before the open record. The moisture is just below the plowshare. And then the church edifice in its exterior structure as well as interior services is designed to be the same sort of reminder of faith that is in us. The tower of our own church springing far up into the sky is itself the Apostle's creed in stone, at least the first clause of it—"I believe in God." "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help," said David. The church spire pointing on high stands out in the daylight, the evening light and the night light, not to lift our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help, but unto the sky from whence cometh our help.

All these things are arranged not so much to give us new faith as to bring us close to the faith we have. The same wholesome discipline comes to us by our contact with men whose faith in the heavenly Provi-

dence is warm and earnest. They do not give us their faith but they strengthen ours. We gain faith by their touch as steel gains magnetism by the touch of a magnet ; they stir the instinct of faith that is already in us waiting to be stirred. Because we believe in the fatherhood of God already we can have our belief reinforced by their belief.

Great events remind us of God and of our faith in Him. Strong, earnest moods of mind easily set us in near relation with a heavenly guide and provident shepherd. The best and deepest meanings of history as of nature come out only when seen against a divine background. To leave out God is to draw a wet sponge across the best things that history has to say. The history of a century, of a millennium as such, means nothing unless intelligence that subtends the millennium puts a meaning into it. Mind cannot read what mind has not first written. All interpreting of history proceeds on the quiet assumption of a mind that has worked its thought and built its purpose into history. In this way the study of history helps us to find our faith and feel our faith. The mind of the reader and writer meet on the printed page. So in our efforts to interpret events the mind that construes touches the mind that constructs. And especially, as I said, does this hold of the great and stirring events of history. It is the effect of a great disaster not only that it humbles us but humbles us before God ; of a great victory not

only that it exalts us but exalts us before God. We have known how when an entire nation is stricken it is involuntary with us to carry our crape into our churches and our tears into our sermons. Such occurrences have in them a power to make the divine very real and our dependence upon the divine very actual and very conscious. The poets have a way of calling the mountains divine; so events that slope up in colossal proportion from the common level of occurrence seem always in the like way freighted with supernal import.

We are also reminded of our faith by the events and crises of our life. Peter lost and found his faith in the same instant when he cried, "Lord, save or I perish." If we are appalled by the insignificance of the occurrences of life and suspect they are beneath the notice and care of supreme wisdom, we have to remember that even the wisest men are also the ones that can most easily change the focus of their regard and adjust it to the minuter as well as larger interests of life. We must remember, too, that the little things of nature show the same refinement and exquisiteness of skill as those that are more imposing, and that the same sunshine which makes the planets to glow in the celestial spaces tints also the flowers in your dooryard, and brightens to whiteness the snowflake that drifts athwart your window.

Anything that stirs us out of the monotonies of life and lifts us from grooves, throws us out more con-

sciously upon the support of the divine arms. Whenever we find ourselves suddenly confronting the unknown, it moves our faith, and if not makes us pray, stirs the instincts that are all the time waiting to break forth into prayer. The going down of the sun in a gentle and plaintive way sets us face to face with the future, and the evening hour is therefore naturally a praying hour. Eliezer prayed at the falling of the day. The same chapter also tells us that Isaac went forth into the field to meditate at eventide. A sense of the unknown shows to us our faith and throws us back upon the arms of God. Faith that continues unconscious in the daylight becomes real and conscious at night as we "pray the Lord our soul to keep. If I should die before I wake I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take." When we part with our friends for a season we say "good-by," and perhaps think into the words all the meaning they properly contain, "God be with you." And when we bid our friends a long farewell—how our hearts reach up unto God, and with what earnest looking unto him we follow them as they move through the swinging gate and go to be with them that have gone on before and waiting to bid welcome to us when we shall follow.

May we who rest so cozily in the comforts and amenities of life and who lean down so heavily upon the enriching friendships of the good and the strong and the beloved, discover, when disappointments

strike and bereavements overtake, that our leaning, even more than we suspected, was after all upon the arm of the Lord. As the light becomes paler and paler in the west may the stars glow with a steadier and cheerier splendor. And when we come at last to the night-fall of life, like Eliezer out amid the evening lights of Mesopotamia, may our thoughts bend naturally into prayer, our faith assert itself in the gloaming, and there be the revealings to us of the divine arm mighty to save, the divine hand gentle to shelter and to guide.

VII

Doing, the Means of Knowing.

I Being in the Way, the Lord Led Me.—Genesis xxiv:27.

ELIEZER had been sent to find a wife for Isaac. His mission proving successful, he bowed his head and worshipped the Lord saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth; I being in the way, the Lord led me."

In a previous discussion of this same text it became fairly evident that there exists considerable more faith in God's daily governing control over us than men themselves are regularly conscious of. The confidence we have in a divine supervision may not mount up to the point of a defined thought in the mind, but may for all that have great power to quiet and steady us. Our concern, then, was more with the divine side of the matter. The peculiarity of our text is that it gives us a glimpse of both sides: I being in the way the Lord led me—the human and divine both. What interests us this morning is the human factor in the case; not God's guidance *per se;*

but where we have to be, and what we have to do in order to secure it.

I am sure we shall get along best here by not trying to be profound. It is one of the striking features of this narrative of Eliezer that it runs so close to theological sand-bars without becoming grounded on them. Scholarliness has its prerogatives; acumen, even in matters of religion, is not without its advantages: still a thinker may be so curious, and a theologian so deep-searching, that like a freighted vessel drawing a good deal of water, he may be dragged into the shallows by the very load he carries.

It is not our intent to say that Eliezer was superficial. He only illustrates the ease with which an earnest and practical mind can get along with difficulties that might prove very troublesome to one who had less business on his hands, and more leisure for speculation; very much as a man with a matter on his mind, needing to be at once attended to, with confidence and safety would cross a narrow footbridge that might prove the death of some other who had time to calculate the dizzy height at which it was swung. Men are every day falling off because they have time to be impracticable and leisure to get dizzy. Much is to be said in behalf of work as an antidote to doctrinal irresolution and theological debility. Eliezer was at work, a live, earnest man of affairs. The doctrine that God's action and man's action supplement each other gave therefore pleasant

support to his feeling, without offering provocation to his thinking. He felt the fact without the time or temper to think the manner of the fact. And indeed at the impulse of feeling, this slave out of Damascus has put the difficult truth in a manner of dignified simplicity, which a mind more scholarly and refined than his might well afford to envy: "I being in the way, the Lord led me." An illustration of what occurs so often, that divine truth best touches the life at the easy level of natural thinking. True sight is without effort. The soul's need and God's supply are at grade. Hard thinking wrings the truth of its juice. Even the lightning is retarded by its own velocity. The prism shows the strands of the sunbeam, but spoils it as light. "I being in the way, the Lord led me."

Everything that took place on that expedition of Eliezer's came to pass in a most simple and natural way, and yet at the end of it all he said, "The Lord led me." He took, we presume, the traveled route, and so far as we can gather traversed it in the ordinary way, heard no voices, dreamed no dreams, saw no lights; and yet, "the Lord led me." He arrived at the city of Nahor at evening time, and stopped outside the city at a spring; which does not need to be accounted for; his camels were thirsty. At that hour the women came out from the city to draw water; which it was usual for them to do at that hour, the narrative remarks quietly. And yet "the Lord

led me" said Eliezer. It is nothing to excite remark that among the young women that came out to draw water was one of Isaac's cousins. It is likely that there were other such there beside Rebecca. This was the homestead, that was why Eliezer went to Haran. That Rebecca should have given him to drink and drawn also for his camels, reflects not only her own kindliness but the general hospitality of the Orient. That she should have been a damsel of surpassing beauty and therefore suitable in this respect for Isaac is as easily explained as the rest. Eliezer was evidently waiting for just such a young woman to appear before he asked the favor of a drink. That is clearly contained in the story. He did not ask the Lord to designate the woman, but selected her himself according to his own best taste and judgment, and prayed that the one he was going to select in that way might be the one of whom the Lord had already himself made choice. And having loaded her with gifts, and having discovered that she was of the kindred of his master, there by the side of the well he bowed his head, worshipped God and said, "I being in the way, the Lord led me."

Everything then came along quietly; nothing irregular that would suggest interposition, nothing like a break between successive incidents that would show or seem to show God working across from the one to the other. So long as the electric wire is without break the electric current is continuous, and

makes of itself no show nor sound. But with a fault in the wire the current leaps the interval with a flash. In the line of this story there is no break which gives opportunity for a flash in the transit: nothing scintillant: each step the natural preface to the one after, the natural sequel to the one before: everything natural—if we know what that is—everything as Eliezer was accustomed to see it: and still "the Lord led me."

Eliezer did not pauperize the ordinary method of event for the purpose of endowing his theory of Providence. He did not put nature out of joint in order to give the race to supernature. The farther we get along in the world, the less men are going to have to say about special Providences and divine interpositions. God is on the side of method. It is to the credit of Eliezer that when events proceeded so methodically he recognized God's agency so distinctly. We have made great gain in our doctrine of Providence, when we have learned to feel that there is just as much room for God to work inside of steady and ordinary events as inside of startling and spasmodic ones.

This sets us in a pleasanter and more unconstrained relation with Providence, and makes it rather the ground for us confidently to walk on, than the sky for us to look timidly up to. It lets us read with a stronger accent the commonplace events of every day. It puts new meaning into the current of history and the

daily drift of life. It lets divineness into small matters. We come to recognize heavenly purpose and guidance, even if to-day *is* easily explicable by yesterday, and to-morrow the legitimate child of to-day. The miraculous and the non-miraculous soften their mutual asperities. God works at our level, and with such intimacy of action that it is not quite easy always to tell what is his and what ours.

If Eliezar was inspired to do what he did, he had at any rate no *feeling* of being inspired. Probably that is the case with most inspiration. Eliezer proceeded to do as he thought best: but what he thought best to do himself was somehow what God had already thought best to have him do. Consciously exercising his own judgment he was at the same time unconsciously exercising God's judgment. Being honest and unselfish, and anxious to do right, his judgment, as was natural, became the small fac-simile of God's judgment; just as a small magnetic needle will point in the same direction as a large one. And that, I take it, is nine-tenths of inspiration and ninety per cent. of divine Providence.

Providence in the sense in which it was exercised over Eliezer is not a matter of visions nor of voices, nor is it a matter of God's forming our judgments for us, nor of holding our wills perforce at an angle with our own proper volition. Rather is it a matter of his having his own will and so arranging that we shall be able to find out what that will is, and

therefore be in a situation to do it. That is Providence; that is divine Government. The good man will be the one to discover what God's will is most easily, and the one to do that will most promptly. Hence it is that David says: "The steps of a *good* man are ordered of the Lord."

In our case, therefore, as in that of Eliezer, manifestly, there is nothing in God's provident supervision of us that trenches upon our proper personality. Our faculties are left unabridged. Will has free scope for exercise. Discernment, sense, sagacity, have left to them all their natural play-room. We are led of the Lord, but not as a horse is led—by the bits. In cases where right is doubtful and expediency is uncertain, if we are honest we shall not be allowed of God permanently to go astray or to mistake. We shall gravitate toward what is right and best, but we shall gravitate in the use of the best powers of reasoning or the best sources of information we know how to avail ourselves of. In our perplexities as to what we best do and where we best go, a wise human counselor is the modern equiva lent of an old covenant angel. The Bible, the con science, good sense, intelligent friends, surrounding circumstances, native bents and predispositions, these are all of them appliances to be industriously worked for knowing God's mind. The only safe way is the Lord's way. The only safe plan for ourselves is the Lord's plan for us. If we seek it we shall find it; and

if we find it and walk in it there will be fulfilled in us the words of Eliezer: "I being in the way, the Lord led me."

Providence is not an affair of startling events, visions traced out in the air, finger-boards supernaturally set up along the way we are to travel. Pillars of fire such as were seen in the wilderness are accidents of heavenly guidance, not its substance. We can hardly be interested in those old flashing demonstrations of guidance, if we suppose them to be anything more than crude and sensuous symbols of a fact as true and real to-day as then. The pillar of fire in the desert was an accommodation to feeble times and a childish age, and was only like the title placed under a painting, written there to show the uninstructed what the instructed know without any showing: "God in History" for beginners, like ideas put in the form of pictures for the sake of children that cannot read.

This way of looking at the matter is justified by our narrative, and is staying and wholesome; staying, because it gives us a higher power and wisdom than ourselves to trust in; and wholesome because it at the same time makes human intelligence mean more, and man's efforts count for more. The best doctrine of "faith and works" is that in which each of the two does the most to stimulate the other. There will be the best working where a man has prayed as though he thought everything depended on God. There

will be the best praying where a man has worked as though he thought everything depended on himself. Careful preparation for the journey, and the exercise of his best judgment did not hinder Eliezer from crediting God with the results; and his confidence that God would bring him to happy results only made him more attentive to the loading of the camels and the providing of the earrings and the bracelets. Such a view of Providence leaves us feeling that the more God does the more opportunity there is for man to do; and the more man does the more opportunity is left for God to do.

Proper confidence in a divine wisdom will then stimulate us to seek after it; and proper confidence in divine power will stir us up to stand and work in the drift of it. The child only walks the more industriously because the father in whose hand his own is held really does so much of the walking for him. When you build along a perpendicular it gives you courage, for you know that then the whole gravity of the globe stands pledged to make your building stanch. It is related that Alexander was only made more earnest when told by the priest at Jerusalem that he was the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy. Sailors only crowd on more sail when the vessel is moving with the wind. And it was to *stimulate* the Philippians that Paul wrote to them, "Work, for it is God that worketh in you."

This incident from Genesis throws a flood of light

upon the case of any man who is in any kind of earthly perplexity: "I being in the way, the Lord led me." The unsettled questions of life form large part of our most wearing experiences; and such questions are continually arising. There is no journey that has so many forks in the road as the journey of life. Now there were a great many turns which Eliezer might have taken between Hebron and Haran, between lading the camels and obtaining Rebecca's promise to go back with him, any one of which would have involved failure. He had a very definite idea of what he was to get, but a very indefinite idea as to *whom* he was to get and how he was to get her. But there was one step in the expedition that was distinct—that he had no question about, namely, that he was to harness—gird his camels—and take the road East. "I *being in the way*, the Lord led me." He saw one step ahead which is all any man ever needs. It is a very dark night when there are not at least three feet between the point where you stand and the nearest stumbling-stone that will endanger you. You do not know the way to Hartford, but you know the way to the cars, and they will take you there. It has always been my experience that if I did not know what I was to do second, it was unmistakably clear what I ought to do first. It will always be in point to gird the camels.

Ninety-nine per cent. of our perplexities are about matters that we have not yet quite gotten to. There

is a game which children play of setting up a row of blocks at a little interval from each other and then toppling over the first against the second, which falls and knocks down the third, and so down the whole line. I expect the problems, the practical problems of our life, are arranged in a good deal the same way; that there is a certain order in which our difficulties need to be taken, and that the easy knocking over of the one nearest will itself go a long way at any rate toward leveling the next and all that stand forward of it. The guns of each fortress taken we shall find bear on the outworks of the next. There is divine economy in not having to-morrow come until after to-day; just as to-day is easier for having had yesterday. "I being in the way, the Lord led me." The act of getting ready to start probably settled for him some matters that came after the start, and so on till he reached Mesopotamia. Questions settle themselves when we are on the road, as the lantern we carry in the night lengthens its light forward with each onward step. The most crooked river will let us out to the sea if the boat is pushed into the channel.

Our greatest weariness comes from bearing burdens that have not yet been really laid on us. Half is done when we have concluded to take matters up one at a time, in the order in which they have been laid down for us. The first thing is always plain and easy; and, if you will think of it, it is

never anything but the first thing that we have to do.

The matter of limiting our anxiety to what comes next, we might apply to the matter of doctrine. The world is full just now of doctrinal perplexities. Laymen ponder perplexities and ministers preach perplexities; and yet nine-tenths of the matters that are under agitation are no more relevant to our immediate needs, with work to do, characters to form, and souls to save, than a knowledge of trigonometry is to an accountant. It really takes very little doctrine to meet our requirements as every day Christians. If we utilized all the truths we are certain of we should be in much better position to decide upon others that we are in doubt about. It is working at cross-purposes with Providence to put into a problem the thought which belongs to a duty lying between us and the problem. To know things which it is not practically relevant to our characters to know, is an affair of scholarship not of religion nor of ethics. If you do not know what to believe, do the duty which comes next and you will gain by it as much knowledge as you need for the discovery of the next duty. Behavior is basal to knowledge; "If any man will *do*, he shall *know*," said the Lord.

The principle of our text has also its relation to men who would like to be of some use to the world, to the suffering and the distressed, and do not know exactly how. The difficulty here, too, most likely

lies in trying to solve remote problems and carry large and distant burdens, instead of lending a hand to the first concrete case of distress that offers. There is no difficulty in getting into beneficent work if we will take opportunities by the handle. To chafe our hearts against the monstrous problems of sin and suffering in this city, for example, goes not nearly so far as taking personal hold of an actual case of distress and relieving it. Problems are most easily solved in the field. Things alter their appearance as we get in among them; lines grow in distinctness as we come nearer them. Act trains thought. The mind determines the hand, but the hand also makes revelations to the mind. There are too many philanthropic people standing around on the outer edge of human distress. Doing is a means of knowing. Action is the stone on which faculties get whetted for discernment and accomplishment. We have not to carry burdens in the mass. The world began to grow happier and better by the ministry of a man who helped people just as and where he chanced to meet them. The highway opens out in front of every man's door. It is always safe to gird the camels and get onto the road: "I being in the way, the Lord led me." The longer you act like Eliezer the more wisdom you will find in his unconscious theology. Trust yourself for the first thing and the Lord for the thing after.

And then, in a single closing word, let me apply

this to the case of men who hesitate to begin a Christian life for fear they will not hold out. There is a great deal that is hidden away in a Christian life before we are through with it, but as with everything else, its beginning stands out in the clear. As with Eliezer the first step is in the light. Everything depends on taking things up in their order. If you are a pedestrian you know what a difference there is in the spirit with which different men walk. One man will start out on a tramp of thirty miles with a pleasant and vivacious swing that you would think he was only going to the top of the next hill. Well, that is all he is going to do now; and when that is finished he will be in admirable trim to take the next stretch. The next man will start tired, and stoop with the load of the coming thirty miles already on him, aching with what he is *going* to do.

It is the like of that that is deterring some of these people from beginning the *Christian* walk. I am told that every little while. Eliezer would *never* have started if he had determined to wait around Hebron till he had gotten all the details of the enterprise worked out before he started. He learned on the road. The boy's shoulders grow broader before it is time for them to carry man's burdens. You have no business now with to-morrow's obligations. You certainly will not hold out unless you begin. Eliezer began by doing the first thing and trusting God for the second. Faith and works from

the start. *Perseverance* of the saints is not your matter, not yet. Disembarking pertains to the *end* of the voyage. Being a Christian is a matter of doing the first thing that needs to be done, trusting to God to make clear to us the thing which comes next. Perseverance of the saints is merely *continuing* to do that. Christianity is always a matter of "*Now.*" It begins with "now" and is "now" all the way through. And it is the now that is just here that is all you have anything to do with; and it will always *be* so. "*I being in the way*, the Lord led me."

You will not get to Haran to-day, but you can get on the road. You can set your face Godwards and Christwards: you can leave off waiting and start, and take a step to-day, and then you will be in readiness to take the next step to-morrow. You are going to begin sometime: you expect to begin sometime. The present moment is yours. I trust that we shall find as we meet together in our after meeting that some here have seized this moment, that a beginning is going to be made with some of you and camels harnessed and the Lord have opportunity given him to show that now, as in Mesopotamia, he takes care of them that commit themselves to him, and proves himself a trusty leader and sufficient helper to all them that do his will and put themselves in the path of his appointment.

VIII

I Know Whom I Have Believed.

I Know Whom I Have Believed.—II Timothy i:12.

"WHOM" Paul says. Quite another thing from "what." "I know *what* I have believed;" that is good. "I know *whom* I have believed; that is better — best. Such believing has easily its advantages, several of them. When the thing we believe is a person, our believing, creed, becomes simple and coherent; the lines of our thinking all gather at a point, our creed is made one, like grapes growing in one cluster from one stem. There is no danger of forgetting it; no need of writing it down and committing it. It is always there. It is no sum of particulars; it is not the footing of a long column of details that have no relation to each other or regard for each other.

I am interested on occasion to ask Christian people what their Christian belief is. It is instructive to note the wide divergence of answer. One believes *one thing*, another, *another thing*. "I know *whom* I have believed." To be a Christian is to believe in

Christ. And what is it to believe in Christ? We reach too high for our answers; necessary truth grows on low branches. The boy says—I believe in my father. All is told that needs to be told. It is simple, complete. The boy does not write it down. "I believe in my father." Creed that converges in a person can get along without pencil and paper. Sentences and chapters and annotations are an afterthought.

Another thing about this creed with a person in it is, that it gives something for *all* our faculties to do. "I know *what* I believe;" such a creed is only intellectual; it is an affair of thinking, reasoning, inference. Church creeds are made by the scholars of the church. Mind does it. It is matter of analysis and definition. An eminent jurist put his law-students into theology for mental training. The reduction to thought and formula of the great truths of religion is grandly disciplinary, but disciplinary to intellect. Choate's students were still nothing but students. Theology only taught them to *think* better.

Theological thought and discussion works so far only on the same lines as scientific. *Mind* only works; no heart, nothing volitional. A creed that gathers directly about *person* yields keen thinking, but yields much beside. It starts feeling, sets the affections in play, draws out the will and puts it to work. We each of us have one or more men that we believe in, with all our mind, heart and strength — men

that are so far forth our creed; and they stir and stimulate us in *every* way, clearing our ideas, to be sure, but firing our hearts and making our resolutions sinewy and nervy. Christ made Paul a man of profound thinking, but a man of fervid passion and giant purpose — gave *every* faculty in him something to do. He was great all over.

A third and consequent advantage in a personal creed is that it is the only kind that can produce effects, and work within us substantial alteration. The average creed is rather a symptom of what the holder of it is now, than a force competent to make him other, wiser or better than he is now; it only denotes how far we have gone in our thinking, and the mental attitude in which we just now happen to be standing. We are more likely to alter our creed than we are to have our creed alter us. Creed is flower, not stalk. The man supports his creed more than his creed him.

I am not criticising creeds. It is an excellent thing to know what we believe, and to be able with conciseness and effect to state it. And it is pleasant to have two men, or two hundred men, think so nearly alike that they can prepare a creed that they all agree to consent to. But it is they that prepare the creed; they make the creed, and not the creed them; it is the statement of what they happen just now to be in their doctrinal apprehensions. It does not differ from them (if it is really their creed), is no

wiser than they, and no stronger. It will neither lift nor depress. It is only the water-line marking the height at which the current is just now flowing; and water-line will neither shallow a river nor deepen it.

Paul does not say I know *what* I believe, but I know *whom* I believe, which goes wider and higher. Such a creed is not one that Paul holds, but one that holds Paul, and can do something with him therefore. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and this reaches a great way farther than holding a particular set of opinions in regard to the second member of the Trinity. Such orthodoxy is mere play. It makes far less difference what studied opinions a man holds in regard to Christ, than that he believes in Christ in the same unstudied and unreasoned way that every true son believes in his true father. It is of less account whether you suppose the sun is eight feet across or eight hundred thousand miles across, than it is that you stand out in a warm bright place and get the benefit of the sun. The sick man walking abroad says, "I like to get out doors; I believe in sunshine." Perhaps he has been to school and understands how three strands weave themselves together inside every integral sunbeam, and perhaps not. No quantity of *correct* idea about the sun can take the place of standing and living where the sun shines; and standing and living where the sun shines will save from fatal results a vast amount of *incorrect* ideas about the sun.

Belief in person works back upon me as an energy, alters me, builds me up or tears me down—at any rate never leaves me alone; it works as gravity does among the stars; keeps everything on the move. Such belief is not mental attitude, but moral appropriation; it is the bee clinging to the clover-blossom and sucking out the sweet. It is regulative and constructive.

We are determined by the person we believe in. Belief makes him my possession. Belief breaks down his walls and widens him out till he contains me. His thoughts reappear as my thoughts; his ways, manners, feelings, hopes, impulses, motives, become mine. I know whom I have believed. We make our ordinary creeds, and revise and amend and repeal them. Personal creeds make us, and revise, amend and repeal us. No picture of a friend can be accurate enough to begin to take the friend's place or do the friend's work. No idea of a person can ever be enough like the person to serve as substitute. Knowing what God is to perfection would never become the equivalent of knowing God. As Christians, we work religious ideas and opinions for a good deal more than they are worth. One of the best results keen thinking can reach is, to show us how little headway we can make on rough ground and in dark places if we've not something beside keen thinking to depend on.

If we bring this to the level of common life, its workings are simple and manifest. It is in the home.

The mother is the child's first creed. He believes in her before he believes what she says, and it is by his belief in her that he grows and ripens. If we cannot tell it all out in words what this believing in a mother or father means, we *feel* the meaning of it, and the deep sense is worth more than the wordy paragraph, any time. The little boy puts his hand in his father's, and insensibly becomes like his father. The miracle of Elisha and the Shunammite's son is done over again in the case of every child. It is the gist of all schooling.

Education is an affair of person—person meeting person. Pupils do not become wise by being told things. Wisdom is not the accumulation of specific cognitions. It is men that educate. Person is the true schoolmaster. Of all the teachers that have had to do with my schooling aside from my own parents, there are only two that I would not be perfectly reconciled to the idea of utterly and forever forgetting. Even an encyclopædia does not become an educator by being dressed in gentlemen's clothes. What best helps a boy to become a man is to have somebody to look up to; which is like our text—"I know *whom* I have believed." Every teacher needs to be able to say of himself, in a limited sense at least, what Christ the arch-teacher said of himself, "I am the truth."

And out on the broader fields of social and national life we encounter the same principle over again.

The *present* wealth of a people depends largely upon its commerce and productive industries. The stability of a people and its promise for the *future*, depends quite as much upon the quality of the men upon whom the masses allow their regards to fix and their loyalty to fasten. Every great man in our history, recognized by the people as great, is so much foundation for the support of an honorable and dignified generation to come; while every second and third rate man that is by any means foisted into an admiring and notable conspicuity is so much done toward dragging the masses down into hopeless mediocrity, and debasing them to a helpless moral inanity. Dirty gods and goddesses made dirty Greeks. Old principles still hold. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted. We are determined by the men we believe in. Only person is power. Christian faith not only appropriates the teaching, but the Teacher; not only the promises, but the great Promiser.

"I know *whom* I have believed." And believing in Christ in this way to begin with, issued in Paul's believing a host of particular facts in regard to Christ, and Paul's theology is his blossomed piety. No amount of faith in Christ's words will add up into faith in him. You must have noticed how full all Christ's teachings are of the personal pronoun "I." Paul's Christianity began on the road to Damascus. Christ came to him not as a conclusion,

but as a premise; and on his knees he said, "Lord," and what he afterward came to know about Christ was what he found in Christ. "Christ is made unto us wisdom." He found and taught the truth, but it was the truth as it was *in Christ*. His theology, when it came, was the outward budding of just this initial loyalty to Jesus which gave Jesus the opportunity to form himself in Paul and so to inform Paul. The only man that can truly inform me is the man that can *form* himself *in* me; that is what *information* means—immensely personal again, you see, as everything of much account is.

And it is so everywhere. Religious matters, in this respect, step in the same ranks with other matters. The grandest convictions that we receive from other people are not constructed in us by their logic, but created in us by their personal inspiration. Logic does not count much. A small and quiet kind of baptism is all the time going on between a great man and a small man, so that we can speak with tongues that we are not aware of having learned. Men are not *persuaded* to be Christians, nor argued into an acceptation of fundamental truths. There is a man that doesn't believe in Christianity, but he believes in his Christian mother, and he does not think carefully enough to discover that part of that faith is faith in his mother and part of it faith in the religion that has made her the strong, sweet and saintly creature she is.

The gospel is not the divine book, but the Divine Man, and a great many miniature copies of that gospel are around us, working still effects along personal lines.

We make Christianity hard by crumbling it up into impersonal propositions. It is no part of our genius to like a truth apart from its flesh and blood incarnation in some live man. It is a hard and awkward thing for me to believe in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul for instance. I do not like the doctrine; my intellect abhors it. No logic could persuade me of its truth, and I should never think of trying to syllogize anybody else into a possession of it. But my father is immortal and I know it. Your mother is immortal and you cannot start in your mind a suspicion to the contrary. Your mother—I speak it reverently—has to you "brought life and immortality to light." Let us be done with bare doctrinal nakednesses that are forms of truth without the substance, and that anger the soul and madden the intellect. It is no matter of wickedness that you cannot with your whole heart take hold of the doctrine; a doctrine has in it no heart to challenge your heartiness. Believe in your immortal mother or in your immortal wife, and remand the unfleshed *dogma* of immortality to the limbo of forgetfulness where it belongs.

One or two things more, and I will stop. From all this we gather that a man who gets called an unbeliever, and even calls himself such, may believe a great

deal more than he suspects. Unconscious orthodoxy is a factor of the times that needs to be taken into earnest account. There are quantities of unutilized and unsuspected faith. Some of it comes into the meeting-house and a good deal of it stays out. How can the faith in the church get into intelligent and sympathetic relation with the faith that is outside? It is a reflection to solemnize us that no man is either too wise or too wicked to become a disciple and an apostle, if only he were rightly met and dealt with. Even Judas hung himself because he had wronged the Lord. If you are a half-believer or no believer at all, do not, I pray of you, estimate your unbelief by the difficulty you find in accepting specific doctrinal statements. You do not believe in immortality. Did you ever see anybody that you had some little idea had about him something or other that death could not touch? Let alone the abstract and come close to the concrete and personal, and let it work. You reject the doctrine of a change of heart; and it is a doctrine repugnant to our natures and a conundrum to our intelligence. Did you ever see anybody who stopped being what he had been and commenced being what he had not been? If you find it hard work to square your opinions with the catechism, see whether you do not draw into a little closer coincidence with men and women whose lives transparently embody the Gospel, and then draw your inference. The Gospel is

not a book, nor a catechism, nor a formula, but a life.

To another class of uncertain hearers I want to add, Do not try to get your religious ideas all arranged and your doctrinal notions balanced. There is a great deal of that kind that is best taken care of when it is left to take care of itself. There is no advantage in borrowing some one's else opinion and no use in hurrying your own opinion. Saul had no creed, but he humbled himself before the Lord, became Paul and wrote more theology than has been digested in eighteen centuries. Begin with what is personal, as he did: "I know *whom* I have believed." Try to know the Lord. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge." "Blessed are the poor in heart for they shall see God," which means that conscience makes insight. "If any man will do his will he shall know." Christ gives us in knowledge as much as we give him in obedience. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added." It is the orthodox heart that makes the orthodox creed. There is no other way of beginning to be a Christian but the old way—"Come unto *me*."

And you and I, fellow Christians, owe it to these unsettled people among us and about us to help them to strong anchorage upon Christ; and our qualifications for the work will be our own thorough

rest in and establishment upon Christ and an ineffable commixture of love and tact, and tact considered not as a natural talent, but as a heavenly grace. And, first of all, we have got to soften down all our asperity toward those who do not think as we do, and who do not come at things in exactly our way. There is a good deal of faith in the church, and a good deal out of it; but there is no amicable relation between the two. In the old days we are told that the church had favor with *all* the people, which is not so now.

It appears to me that there are certain things that are going to be managed differently sometime from what they are now. I don't know, but I guess so. We must needs remember that no error is entirely erroneous. We shall be safer, as well as more Pauline, if we assume that a good deal of unbelief is only ignorant belief. We will do better not to forestall the judgment day, and not to do picket duty on the frontiers of Christ's kingdom, when what we are appointed to do is to herald that the kingdom is here, and to publish the invitation of the Lord—"Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

It is very far from my mind that we ought to make the church a meaningless thing, and its privileges only a nominal matter. At the same time I remember that Philip baptized the eunuch on the spot, and no questions asked (according to the New Re-

vision), and that the poor thief on the cross, whom we should quite likely have been disposed to probate for a half-year, Christ took with him into Paradise the same evening.

In our relations to these people, there is another thing for us to remember of a more positive character, which is, as we have seen, that there is nothing that tells upon men and their convictions like life. Men believe in the personal. Truth pure and simple goes but a little way, except as it is lived. Abstractions are not current outside of the schools. The best preaching of a change of heart is a heart that is changed. These people are not going to be touched by anything that has not breath and a pulse. Living is the best teaching. One honest act done when dishonesty would have taken a premium of fifty per cent. will go farther with the man at your elbow than ten sermons on stealing from this or any pulpit. Nothing is quite real till it is personal. In practical esteem, one moral hero, belted and plumed, outweighs the decalogue; which is to say that one virtue acted is worth ten on paper. So that if you and I are going to help these people to be conscious and pronounced Christians, we are not going to accomplish it by merely telling them about Christ and compounding before them feeble dilutions of divine biography, but by being ourselves so personally charged with the personal Spirit of God in Christ that in our words they shall hear him, in

our love they shall feel him, in our behavior they shall be witnesses of him, and in this way he become to them Way, Truth and Life, all-invigorating power, all-comprehensive creed.

IX

The Lord Is My Shepherd.

The Lord Is My Shepherd.—Psalm xxiii:1.

WE are saved the tedium and the necessity of exposition. The heart here is a more learned commentator than the head. Essentials are easy, lie close by, and do not require to be won by strenuous thinking. Bustling, intellectual strivings with the deep, blessed things of God, hinder our appreciative view of them, as the deep places in the river are visible only through still water; as the grasses load themselves heavily with dew only on quiet nights, and as it is the tremulousness in the air that prevents astronomers from gaining a clear hold upon distant lights.

"The Lord is my Shepherd." The sweet reality, then, of this Shepherd-Psalm taxes us no more than the survey of a picture would do, or the hearing of a melody, and that not because it deals with the matter carelessly or lightly, for the picture also will often carry us farther than the paragraph, and the melody takes us to places we could not have reached with the symphony. The Psalm does not provoke our think-

ing; touches us away down below our philosophy and our theology; comes to us rather like a covert from the heat, a refuge from weariness, a shelter from the rain, and folds as unthinkingly into the creases of our souls as water adapts itself to the thirsty. Hunger is the best explanation of bread, and the rain soaks easily into the dry sand.

The longings of the human spirit have their own particular beatitude, and better than any other interpreters make clear the meaning of the Holy Word. That Word shows itself to be God's Book, by showing itself to be, first of all, man's book; and around this particular oasis of truth, the 23d Psalm, tired, hungry, erring, and anxious men and women of many nations and generations, have gathered and found green pasturage, still waters, recovery from their wanderings, and gentle light to guide them through the valley of death-shadow. And so long as thirsty men drink water, and drink it too, notwithstanding the seemingly incongruous elements which science shows water to be composed of, so long spirits that are thirsty, and worn, and disquieted, will gather upon this and similar pasturage ground of heavenly comfort and supply, and find in their own deep replenishment, reasons that reason knows nothing about.

And this Psalm brings us near to God and our own souls not only, but near to one another. It is a great, roomy, catholic Psalm. All the great and

blessed things of the Bible are so wide that we can stand on them, all of us, without any jostling, or crowding, or inconveniencing. We fall easily into different ways of thinking; into different schools of theology; into different denominations of religious faith. But after all I do not believe that these marks of discrimination are cut very deep. Children playing on the beach draw long conspicuous lines in the sand, and they wear an aspect, those lines do, of depth and permanence; but when once the tide has moved up over them, and played with the ridges and the furrows, and retreats back to the sea once more, it leaves the beach all white, and leveled, and continuous again. We make, some of us, a good deal of ado about the special fashion of our own creed and cultus, but these marks do not groove down into the substance of the matter, and no one supposes that they do.

The things with which first of all the Gospel has to deal, and which it has to supply, are the great deep, common wants of all human souls; and into a want the denominational idea does not enter. Old School Presbyterians and New School Presbyterians feel in just the same way when they are tired. Congregational thirst and Methodist thirst denote the same thing, and require the same water for its quenching. And so of the spiritual thirsts. "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," which voiced the

prayer of a Jew, and voices our prayer just as well. Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, we can all of us stand up in front of this 23rd Psalm, and feel ourselves so far forth perfectly "brothered" in each other. We can all say "The Lord is my Shepherd," and all confess together that it is only to this Shepherd we can confidently look for green pastures to feed and repose in when we are hungry and tired, recovery to paths of righteousness when we go astray, a presence to cheer us, a rod and staff to comfort us when we move out toward the end, and forward into the dark. Denominational lines are not as much in our life as they are in our act, or even in our thought; however deeply they may have been grooved, we quickly reach a spot that is deeper than the grooving, and in our wants we are all one again.

To press this yet a little farther, dear friend, you that are not a Christian, we are *all* of us the sheep of his pasture. There are some here that I thought would certainly come out and own the Lord as their Shepherd before we came again to the end of our year; but owning him or not, we are of his flock still; straying sheep, but still belonging to his pasture; lost upon the mountains, but the sheep of his fold. The Prodigal Son did not cease to be a son. The very first word he spoke on his return home was "Father." He had never unlearned the word. "He restoreth my soul," says the Psalmist, which

means that we roam off from the way, and with his shepherd-crook he seeks to coax us back. In the way or out of it, he has not let go his hold upon us; lost on the mountains, but not even there beyond the scope of shepherd-ownership or shepherd-care.

"The Lord is my Shepherd"—perhaps you do not say it; but when you hear it spoken, if spoken gently, or tenderly sung, there is stirred a sad echo in the lonely place that is in your soul, which is like the glow of fruit upon an inaccessible branch; like the sound of distant falling water to one who is athirst. And so I do not bring to you any form of words to assent to; I do not expatiate upon the wrong you have done yourself or him in going off for so long into pastures of your own choosing; I only point you to him as the Good Shepherd, knowing that whatever persuasions might be used, their cogency after all would come from the feeling that you have, that there are wants that this Psalm of the Shepherd reminds you of, and makes you tenderly feel, but wants that only the Shepherd of the Psalm can quite reach and altogether satisfy.

David must have written this when he was a good deal more than a youth. The Psalm is not dated, yet its quality is its own date, as the wine-tester finds the age of the wine in the flavor of the wine. We should have known that it was the aged Paul that wrote the letter to Philemon, even if he had not

called himself in it "Paul the aged." Time is a factor in the arithmetic of all life and growth. Experience and discernment ripen much in the same way as corn and wheat ripen. We ought to expect a great deal of an old Christian; we ought not to expect much of a young Christian, only to know that he grows; as we do not estimate the worth of a young tree by its size, or by the amount that it produces; we only require that it grow. Ripeness is not to be extemporized, nor is it transferable. Time is one factor, suffering is the other factor. The two multiplied together and the product sanctified, that is Christian maturity. I hardly think there is any other way. We pray for one spiritual enrichment and another very much as if we supposed graces were "custom-made;" or as though the giver of every good and perfect gift had little parcels of faith, and love, and gentleness, and peace, all measured out, done up, and ready to be delivered to suppliants in the order of application. We should be strangely off if God were not wiser in his giving than we are in our asking. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." God's Spirit alive within us, but held under the pressure of labor and temptation, and pain, that is the slow genesis of our gradual graces; like the leaves on the tree which are determined partly by the interior life and partly by the stern discipline of wind, storm, and sunshine, into which the interior life lets itself forth. They are

fruits of the Spirit, and subject to the economy of fruitage.

This Psalm, diffusing the fragrance and tints of Christian mellowness, consistently betrays the tokens of years. The writer had learned the lesson of weariness—that is in the Psalm. He had passed under the discipline of sin—that is in the Psalm. He had learned to know himself by sinning, and learned to know God by enjoying the divine deliverance and recovery from sin: that is in the Psalm. He had tested God and found him faithful, and tested him so many times that he knew he would always be faithful. In bright, pleasant weather, he had become so intrenched in the might of God's great helpfulness, as to be ready to go into the shadow, and into the night, knowing that however narrow and pent-in the valley might be, there would be at the other end of the valley an emergence into the light again, and that God's comfort would bring him forth from evening into a new morning. That is in the Psalm. The 23d Psalm is an old man's Psalm. We will not therefore try to forestall the autumn. We will not pray for gifts and graces with any such idea as that they will be a direct and instant conferment upon us; but let them come in their own way, upon the boughs and twigs of time and endurance, seeking only to be knit into the life of God in Christ, and let the years of our life, and the toils and pains of them, work together with

the Spirit to engender fruitage that shall be according to the economy of growth and the needs of our own day.

The imagery of the Psalm suggests it to us as a passing lesson, that every man paints religious truth in the colors furnished by his own character of life and mode of occupation. Objects and relations that are familiar to us, furnish us with a vocabulary whose terms even the Holy Ghost himself will have to use if he is going to make to us any revelation. A shepherd, familiar only with pastoral relations, can apprehend the bearing of God toward us only under the *figure* of a shepherd. He thinks in that way. That is the groove along which his conceptions have to slide. David, also made familiar by his occupation with the night stars, finds the glory of God beaming into his eyes along the avenue of the stars; and the constellations that hovered over Syria and Arabia beam up into our eyes from out the Psalter and the Book of Job, the same constellations. So when the Lord preached to the common people of Galilee, he spelled the Gospel out to them in letters furnished by the common places of their own interests and acquaintance. It is a wonderful Gospel, that can not only be translated into a thousand languages, but be told in a thousand different ways inside the same language. When he revealed the Holy Ghost to the water-carrier at Jacob's well, he took the language of the water-carrier, and told her

about a well of water bubbling up into everlasting life. Everybody has his own particular vocabulary, and a very small one at that, and if you cannot talk to him in his vocabulary, you cannot *talk* to him. By-and-by we are going to make earnest with that, and when all the Christians get ready to enter in a thorough and intelligent way upon the work of converting the unschooled masses of our population, we are going to do it through preachers who know a good deal about the Lord, but not so much about the technicalities of academical curricula as to make them incompetent to feel, think, and pray in the exact thoughts, and experience, and imagery of the unlettered people they are trying to serve; full of Bible and Holy Ghost, but able to speak *to* the people because they are *of* the people.

The one impression that flows from off this entire Psalm, is that of a man who has come now where he is able and glad simply to trust, and let himself be taken care of; and that, too, is a long and very slow lesson. Faith is distilled from unquiet experience. We have to learn to trust. In the interior, as in the outward world, storms have a large part to play in bringing forth fruit to perfection. The child by its tumbling and its bumps learns to cling closer to its mother's hand, which is the whole thing in a small way. (There is as good theology to be found in the nursery as in the seminary.) The failure of our plans is not as likely to be hardening as it is to be

mellowing. These lines have recently been written by one of our own number, who after years of declining health and enforced inaction, has just gone into the country to spend what will, we fear, be his last summer here; waiting, perhaps, only till the wheat is ripe before he too shall be gathered in by the Reaper. He writes:

"Dear Lord! my heart hath not a doubt
That Thou dost compass me about,
With sympathy divine!
The love for me once crucified,
Is not the love to leave my side,
But waiteth ever to divide
Each smallest care of mine!"

We do not take counsel of others till our own plans have begun to miscarry. We are almost as likely to succeed by our failure, as we are to be defeated by our success. When the execution of our own will has shown itself a mistake, then our thoughts begin to feel along the track of our Lord's words when he said "Not *my* will but *thine* be done." We learn also to discover in the course of time that disappointment is not fatal. The petals fall off, but that gives more room for the outcome of what was already pushing underneath the petals, and we become suspicious that there is a wisdom that has fitted these things to one another, and been working invisible preparations. The secret of the whole curve is in the smallest arc of the curve, and yet we have to see considerable of that curve before we dis-

cover that its secret is a *divine* secret, and before we can feel like saying "*He* leadeth me," "It is the *Lord* that is shepherding me." Year by year as the small meanings of our life are disproved, they are "worked up" in the wider scheme that the Designer has drafted; the crumbling remains of our broken hopes are economized and wrought into the permanent plan of our life-structure and service; all brooks lead to the sea; little by little we come to let ourselves down upon the support of the Everlasting Arms, give ourselves to the guidance of the Heavenly Keeper, and by the time we have gotten to be as old as David, and have done and suffered as much as David, we are able to echo David if we have his spirit and to say back to him "The Lord is *my* Shepherd, *I* shall not want."

And true to the instincts of age, the Psalmist composes his picture from materials gathered in his boyhood, which is just like an old man. The Psalm is a reminiscence of his youth, and a quotation from his own shepherd-life upon the hill-slopes of Bethlehem. There are two or three things there that might be mentioned, but we will only say this to the children. You know that David in his first years was a shepherd-boy, and it was then that he picked up the words and ideas that he puts into this Psalm. *He* had been a shepherd; he had made *his* sheep to lie down in green pastures, and led them to where they could crop the grass growing down close by the edge

of still waters. The old scenes had during all the years remained in his memory, and quite likely when he wrote this Psalm, he was thinking of some particular pasture, and some particular brook along by the edge of which he had once tended his own loved flock. Old things stay by us—that is what I want to say to the children.

We never get entirely away from the things we lived among when we were little. We shall always be and think and do a great deal as we began being and thinking and doing when we were boys and girls. You will let me say in regard to myself, that the first twelve years of my life I spent in the country and upon the farm. There are a thousand ways in which my thoughts now and feelings and interests and ideas, are made and shaped by those twelve years on the farm. New England stays by me just as Bethlehem stayed by David.

You think you will be very different when you are grown up, from what you are now; well, you will not be. You will be very much the same thing you are now, only more of it; so that you ought to be careful now all the time, and see that you get a good, safe start. Suppose a little apple-tree two feet high, with two branches on opposite sides, and a third branch a little farther up on another side. Twenty years hence you come back and look at that tree; the same three branches are there still—bigger, higher up, but the same; the same sides of the tree,

same slant, same everything, only bigger. Look out, then, for the little branches. Let no branches begin to grow that it will not answer to have continue to grow, for you cannot change them after they get fairly started, and it will hurt dreadfully to cut them off. Your young years will keep coming back to you, and Bethlehem will get into the Psalm.

Only one thought more in a word. We have taken our text from the Old Testament, and yet perhaps we have felt that it is very much like the New in all that relates to its sweetness, tenderness and Gospel impulse. That is one way of putting it; but the fact of the case is, we do not really read the Old Testament any more. An illustration will make my meaning plain. You go out in the morning at three or four o'clock, just as the first edge of the dawn has begun to tinge with twilight the objects of nature dispersed about you; the air still folds itself around you damp and heavy, with only scattered intimations of shapeliness, and only dim suggestions of the beauty that still lies wrapt and slumbering. You go out an hour later, just as this great glorious world passes beneath the full baptism of the morning. The mountains, the rivers, the woods, the grass at your feet, are precisely what they were when at the first your eye moved along their uncertain outline. You are in the same world now as then, only now you are reading it by the light of the day that is

come. That is the way we read this Psalm. This Psalm does not lie in the shadow of Sinai any longer: it is bathed in the sweet risen light of Calvary. "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." The Good shepherd *has given* his life for the sheep.

X

The Gadarene Preacher.

Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.—Luke viii:38, 39.

THERE is no knot here to be untied. The passage brings to us less a problem to be solved than a cartoon to be looked at. You have come in here, weary, out of another tired, warm week, with little disposition, probably, to work, least of all to do mental work. Spiritual and mental diet, like physical, ought to vary in some little degree with the temperature and the weather and the calendar. We are only going to look for a few minutes, then, in an easy, leisurely way, at this picture, which shows to us the Gadarene delivered from the devil by Christ; on the ground of that deliverance commissioned by Christ to preach, and instructed to make that deliverance the subject-matter of his preaching. The term here rendered "published" ("published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done

unto him") is the Greek *kerusso*, a word regularly translated "preach." "Go ye and *preach* the Gospel to every creature." "He sent them to *preach* the kingdom of God." Philip went down and *preached* Christ." "But we *preach* Christ crucified." "*Preach* the word; be instant in season, out of season." In all these instances, and great numbers besides (something like fifty), the word rendered "preach" is some form of this same word *kerusso*, that is here translated "published." There is, then, nothing exceptional about this particular instance.

It all goes to show what a simple kind of thing preaching really is as it was originally conceived and practiced. The preacher was the "kerux," the herald, who simply went before and announced the approach of his superior, or of something following on later. It comes out in the passage in Matthew relative to John where it says: "In those days came John the Baptist *heralding* [not "crying"] in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is almost here." Exactly the *office* of a herald.

What interests me, then, primarily in this scene is the simple complexion which it puts upon the matter of preaching, both as relates to the subject-matter of preaching and as relates also to the conditions upon which the being qualified to preach is by Christ made to depend. And let it be said, before we go further, that there is a constant necessity on our part of re-

curring to the old records. There is a steady tendency to depart from the simplicity of the Gospel, both as regards matter and manner. Considerable as is the work that has been done upon the Scriptures in the intervening centuries, and valuable as is the thought which the study of those Scriptures has engendered, it is still sometimes our wish that we might come to the original premises of the Gospel of Jesus without having to survey them through the medium of eighteen centuries of human inference and ratiocination. We can come back to the own words of the Lord, perhaps, but in studying those words we are unable to forget what A, B and C have said about those words, and, in time, what the Lord said; and what Augustine, Luther and Meyer *said* about what the Lord said come to be indistinguishably blended in our minds as all of it so much authoritative revelation direct from heaven.

It is said in the last chapter of the Bible that "if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." And yet, practically, there is no book that, since the beginning of the Christian era, has been growing larger so fast as the Bible has. Everybody has his own little opinion about this and that in the Bible, either matters of doctrine or of practice or of church organization and methods, or whatever else, and these little opinions, almost without our knowing it, stealthily creep into the body of the work,

and, although not very large to begin with, the Gospel is now, practically, the biggest book extant.

You know how literary critics often write their own inferences or emendations on the margin, and how easy it is for these annotations, in a later edition, to become incorporated in the body of the work. That is a fair picture of what is practically all the time transpiring, not more with regard to the sacred books of our own faith than with those of other faiths. It is a fact with regard to every known religion that its tendency has been in the direction of depreciation, and in just the way indicated. It is a statement of Max Müller's that every historic religion is found to be purer and purer the nearer we come to its origin and to its primary records. What Christ criticised in the Pharisees was not their Mosaism, but the accretions of human inference that had gathered around Mosaism—the traditions that had not only grown up out of the Word of God, but had mossed it over, and stifled it, and made the word of God of none effect.

The very light and heat that are in a divine revelation themselves engender tradition, as the very heat of the sun is what creates the fog that hides the sun. You will discover the same fact by comparing the later religion and sacred books of East India with the original Vedas and the modes of religious faith and life that prevailed when the Vedas were composed. Likewise of Mohammedanism. Catholicism

stands related to Jesuism (the religion of Jesus) very much as Phariseeism was related to Mosaism. The German Reformation was a process of sloughing off tradition, and rubbing off the moss that for fifteen centuries had been overgrowing the tree of life. Now, the German Reformation was not a thing that could be done and stay done. You erase to-day the blur that gathers upon your mirror, but you will probably need to erase it to-morrow in the same way. And so there tends to grow up with us, as individuals, churches, and communions, every day, a little of that same coating of individual inference and ecclesiastical hypothesis which went on accumulating for fifteen hundred years, till it was all, or a good deal of it, ejected and rejected in the great upheaval of the sixteenth century. Germany then went back and drank direct at the well of life, instead of sucking through sixteen hundred years of dirty aqueduct.

The steady drift of thought and of life is away from Christ, on the part of those who are Christians as well as on the part of those who are not ; on the side of the church as certainly as on the side of the schools. And it is precisely at the behest of this fact and tendency that I have been moved to select this passage from Luke, touching, as it does, upon matters that, at this distance of time, we can easily get into confusion of thought and difference of opinion over, and stating these matters in a manner of unswerving directness and unblurred transparency.

And the point I want to mention first, both for its own sake and for the sake of what comes after, is that the casting out of the devils from this Gadarene was Christ's own work. Now, we are not going to discuss the matter of demonology. You can construe this matter of devils and devilish possession literally or figuratively. Personally, I am so orthodox as to have implicit confidence in the doctrine of one great devil, and swarms, legions, of little devils. It surely fits Scripture phraseology; it is a way of stating things that the mind can certainly take hold of more easily; it explains some matters that are less explicable on the other view; it is a belief that a man rather insensibly finds himself slipping into as he gets further down into the facts of his own life and heart; and, withal, it is a good deal more creditable to us individually that we can have these impish malefactors nestling within us to throw off just a little of the responsibility of our iniquity upon, than to have to carry the whole weight of our depravity upon our own unassisted shoulders. In other words, I would rather be obliged to say that I *have* a devil than be obliged to say that I am entirely my own devil. On the whole, it is not quite so damaging, saying nothing of its being more Scriptural. Treat that as you will, the fact remains. If we are not full of devils, we are at least full of devilishness; things that need to be gotten out of us and that we have no power of our own to get out; hateful im-

pulses that we can neither wear out, nor cut out, nor stone out.

Now, right here we want to come out into open, distinct ground. Even we who have heard Christ preached for forty years, or perhaps preached him for forty years, need to put to ourselves some pretty pungent and direct questions. We talk about Christ, and go about beating doctrinal bushes and shaking theological trees, but are we teaching and believing in the doctrine of Christ as a personal and divine utility, competent to work in us to-day as practical and abrupt a work as he wrought in that old devil-possessed Gadarene? We are trying to urge men to give up their sins. Here is a man steeped in sensuality; there is a woman crazy after style and millinery. Here is a man with a monomania for liquor, money, or power. We appeal to these people to forsake their cup, their filth, or their greed. We argue with them, we coax them, we entice them, we drive them, we fling Scripture at them, and hurl hot rhetoric at them. What is the use? A miser cannot break from his dollars, nor a silly girl from her flounces and furbelows, nor a sensualist from his cup and debauchery, any more than this Gadarene could leap free from the shackles of Satan. Now, that is the first broad meaning of Christianity, that it is a great divine emancipating hand breaking off our shackles, a great physician from another world entered into this to save us from soul-death

and heal all our spiritual diseases. As pulpit and as pews we must beware or we shall let all the supernatural, or, rather, all the superhuman, evaporate out of our religion.

Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Brother, sister, are we thinking of Christ or talking about him as One that can do a positive work for us, and do it now, sharply and once for all as he did it for this Gadarene? To be sure, when we see a man who for twenty years has been the victim of alcohol, we do say to him that there are for him only two alternatives, Christ or a drunkard's grave. We put ourselves before him upon distinct evangelical grounds. We tell him, without circumlocution or ado, that he is powerless to help himself, and that God in Christ is omnipotent to help him. *We* don't save him, we don't pretend we can save him. We point him to Christ. We tell him where the Physician is that *can* save him. And in all that we are good, sound, thoroughgoing evangelical preachers of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation—that is the distinctive thing about it. It is not law simply, it is not idea simply—it is power, it works, it is the working of God upon us and in us; it rescues, cleanses, heals. And when we are talking to a drunkard (as I say), we do preach Christ and the devil-expelling power of Christ in a wholesome, orthodox way. But a miser in love with his gold, a

woman in love with her own clothes, a libertine throttled by his own lusts, has no more power to break loose from his passion than has the rum-steeped sot to break loose from his. And there are shackles on us all that will cling there till the great Emancipator breaks them off from us. We each need to have done for us what we ourselves cannot do, but what Jesus Christ, the great Sickness-curer and Devil-expeller, can do. We all need him; the man in the pulpit, the men and women down that aisle, just as certainly as the topers and prostitutes down in our Mission on the other avenue. We are all of us vastly better in our ideas than we are in our desires; and only the omnipotence of God in Christ can lift us up from the level of our desires to the level of our ideas, and make us in fact what we are in aspiration, make us in our deed what we are in our prayers.

And that point secured takes us right along to another. When the Gadarene had had the devils cast out of him, Christ said to him, "And now do you go right home, and tell your friends what I have done for you; and he went his way, and preached throughout the whole city." You see what it was that made a preacher of him. You see what was the prime homiletical qualification of that evangelist out of Gadara. He was competent to point men to Christ as a Saviour because he had himself had Christ save him. It takes a great deal to make a man a

preacher if he knows nothing about Christ. It takes amazingly little to make a man a preacher if he does know anything about Christ, if he has had Christ tell him anything, had him do anything for him, had him cast any devils out of him. And exactly as fast as this idea, that it is just Christ himself that is the great Worker, Emancipator, Healer, becomes the monopolizing idea of the Christian Church in its ambition to get sin out of the world, just so fast there is going to be a diminishing disposition to emphasize minutiæ and stickle for technicalities in the instance of those seeking formal recognition as preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The supreme demand is for men who can point the world to Jesus Christ, and can point with a steady, stiff finger, for the reason that they know experimentally the saving power of Jesus Christ. It is very difficult even for the Protestant clergy to abandon utterly the idea of sacerdotalism, and to concede that their order is invested with no redemptive functions, and that it is the very acme of Christian preaching simply to lift the eyes of the people to the cross and him that was crucified thereon. We cling with unconscious tenacity to the idea that somehow *we* save people. We are not thinking of ourselves simply as index fingers, and that, other things being equal, he will always be the greatest preacher (in the true sense of *greatest*) who can best point men to Christ for the reason that

he best knows where and what Christ is. Hence the might of Luther, the colossus of the German Reformation—tore one whole book right out of the Bible and spat upon it, and yet made Christendom richer, mightier, holier, just because he had entered into the mystery of God in Christ and could point the generation to where he had himself gone before.

Luther was a great index finger pointing Germany to the Cross. He threw away the broken mugs and smashed the dirty pitchers out of which the generations had been trying to drink the bailed water of life, and conducted them to the very edge of the living fountain flowing fresh and limpid. That was what Luther did. And yet Luther, Martin Luther, would have stood no more chance of receiving unanimous ordination at the hands of the New York Presbytery than he would of being elected to the Papacy by the Roman Catholic Cardinalate. And still this old heretic, with this ragged Bible—book of James ripped clean out of it—did more to precipitate the kingdom of heaven than our whole synod could do, conservatives and progressives all pulling together. That blind man whose eyes Jesus opened did not know much. He did not pass any kind of an examination. He could see, and Jesus had opened his eyes so that he could see. That was all he knew. Poor, little, miserable, shriveled creed, hedged all around with alternating exclamation and interrogation marks! And yet that man, with

only a thimbleful of ideas, and kicked out of the synagogue, with his opened eyes flushed with new-born light looking up gratefully into the eyes of the Lord, has already enticed more souls, probably, into the kingdom of the Eye-opener and Soul-saver than you and I have, laity and clergy all combined. The question is, Who is the man that knows the way to Jesus and can tell it?

But are we not insisting with more and more strenuousness that students of medicine should not be licensed to practice as physicians till they have been thoroughly drilled in all the minutiæ of the science, and can assent heartily to the dogmas of the school in which they have been instructed; and shall we be less critical and urgent in the instance of men who are aspiring to be the physicians of the soul?

But we are not aspiring to be physicians of the soul. That is just the point. We have had a great deal too much in the way of attempts at human redemption, and that is a great part of the reason why men, churches, and communities are so long in getting well and becoming robust. We ministers are not physicians. There is nothing new about this. You remember what Peter said of the man healed at the gate of the Temple: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of

the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." *We* are not physicians.

The illustration just urged from the medical profession does not illustrate, and has no kind of relevancy. Suppose that I have recovered from disease under the treatment of a homeopathic physician. A friend comes to me suffering from the same malady, and says to me, "You have had such and such a disease, and such and such a homeopathic doctor cured you?" "Yes." "Will you be so kind as to give me his name and address?" "Well, my friend," I say, "I don't quite see how I can; not being myself medically informed, it does not seem quite the thing that I should venture any information in regard to so difficult and delicate a matter." "I don't care whether you have got any medical information or not; that is not what I want of you. I only want you to tell me the street and number of your doctor." "I understand that very well; but there are some very funny things about homeopathy, and although it does cure men almost magically, still I am afraid that there are some little points involved in that system that I am not quite sound upon. As regards all its essential principles I am a homeopathist, heart, soul, and body, and whenever I am sick never think of applying to a physician of any other school." "I don't care for all that rigmarole. It has nothing

to do with my case. You believe in your physician, and say he has cured you. Now can't you be neighborly and humane enough to tell me where he lives?" "Be patient, my friend. This hesitancy on my part may seem a little harsh, I grant, especially as you are suffering, and I know my physician could instantly relieve you; and, besides that, he is only a few doors away. Still, this is a delicate matter. Medicine is no common affair. Things must be done decently and in order. Strange as it may seem, I suppose it really would be better for you to suffer—shall I say to die?—than for one in my condition and situation to take any kind of overt part in the matter." "But can't you just simply tell me where he lives?" "Don't lose your temper. There are some deep psychological principles involved here. I have already indicated that, heartily as I believe in homeopathy, there are some frontier matters that I have a question about. And doubt spreads. It is like musk, the possibilities of all-pervasiveness are in it. One loose brick is a menace to the whole building. It is in medicine just as the clergymen say it is in theology when, if you ask whether an interrogation point in the Bible ought'nt to have been a period, you are really right on the edge of giving up the whole Bible. I would like to answer your question, and it seems to me that I could answer it in a way that would not mislead you; but we must remember that a small doubt off in one corner of the mind really invalidates

every mental process from circumference to center. Besides all that, I have not yet told you the worst. I have read considerably the writings of Hahnemann, the father of homeopathy, myself, and I find a few things there that it seems to me would be just as well omitted; fully as well. I do not say that it is so—it only seems to me as though it might be so. Some things, too, not closely germane to the main theme, that, to my judgment, have not exactly the ring of Hahnemann's mind; and in the solitude of my own room and in the quiet of the night I have even ventured to wonder whether possibly they are not due to some other mind and hand than that of Hahnemann. No, my friend, I am sorry I cannot give you the address of my great physician. He could cure you—I know he could. But we must be consistent. We have got to draw the line somewhere. Let me certify you of my tender interest in your case; and if your disease should prove fatal, as it certainly will if you do not consult the physician, let me assure you that among all who will be in attendance at your obsequies there will not be one who will mourn with a sincerer grief or shed a more bitter tear."

You will see the bearing of the illustration. We do not claim that it is just in all of its details. It at least lets us see that we are not ourselves physicians, but that ignorance of the technicalities of the healing art, doubts in regard to some matters collateral

with the healing art, do nothing toward disqualifying us from pointing sin-sick souls to the Great Physician, if we have ourselves known experimentally the benefits of his treatment. Whether it be preaching in the home, preaching in the street, preaching in the Sunday-school, preaching in the mission, preaching behind a regulation pulpit, preaching is preaching, and in its distinctive feature it is a matter of leading men to Jesus Christ; and *the* question, beside which all others sink into comparative insignificance, first to be asked of one who desires to be set apart in a formal way to the work of the Christian ministry is, Are you competent to bring men to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and to an experience of his saving grace? You remember that the disciples encountered a man who was doing good work in the name of Christ, but who declined in some respects to train with them. Christ said, He is casting out devils? Yes. Casting them out in my name? Yes. Don't forbid him. That you find in Mark, ninth chapter, thirty-eighth verse.

XI

The Under Man.

Inasmuch as Ye Have Done It Unto One of the Least of These My Brethren, Ye Have Done It Unto Me.—Matthew xxv:40.

I HOPE we have well in mind the whole passage read this morning, out of which this detached clause comes. It is familiar, it is simple, it can mean only one thing, and no more needs expounding than there is need of a candle to find glowworms or ferret out sunshine, and is as innocent of dogmatism as a bird's song or a field of sweet clover.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." We are all interested to know exactly what the Lord thought, and where his sympathies lay. You know a man when you know what he likes. You know the Lord when you know what he likes, and what it is that his thoughts are busy about, and his interests gather around. The Lord sympathized with the under man. He stayed with the man that had been left behind. The Lord was the arch-Samaritan. I am so bound up, he said, with every

one that is hungry and thirsty and lonesome and ragged and sick, that whoever relieves him relieves me. He is on the side of the man that is down. The sick and poor and fallen were his favorites. The ninety and nine he abandoned, and went hunting after the one that was lost. He never lingered around the fold, counting the sheep that were inside. Wicked people he did not blame. He was not here to blame, but to save. He picked for the diseased and the vile. A good man he had little immediate interest in, any more than physicians are interested in well men, or undertakers in live men. He counteracted nature and controverted society.

Society kicks the man that is down. So does nature. From him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. To him that hath, shall be given. That is nature, and that is public sentiment. Success succeeds; failure grows more and more ruinous. The more a man knows, the easier it is for him to know more. The more a man gets, the easier it is for him to get more. The more friends a man has, with the more facility he can multiply friends. Only the best survive; the worst go to the wall. There is no chance for the rear rank, whether physically, intellectually, or morally.

The Darwinian doctrine of the survival of the fittest, is now generally conceded. It is here that grace steps in, and says "We must see what we can do for the man that is behind; try and help a man

survive even if he is *not* the fittest; if he is lame, furnish him a horse so that he can ride; if he is in the rear, coach him; if his cerebral tissue is less finely organized, make available to him the workings of some one's else brain; if his moral springtime is backward, fit up for him a little ethical conservatory with steam heat and a southern exposure, where the buds will have given them a little judicious stimulating and pushing." Barbarism says, If a man is sick, kill him! Civilization says, If a man is sick, send for a doctor. Mosaism said, If a man is wicked, stone him! Christ says, No; take care of him and save him. That is the meaning of the Gospel—take care of him and save him. The proverb says, "The devil take the hindermost." Christ steps in and says, "I will take the hindermost." Nature and society sympathize with the people that are in front; Christ and the Gospel with them that are behind.

The Lord's sympathies being what they are, then, it becomes a very easy matter to do that which will be pleasing to the Lord, and procure us acceptance with him. It is easy to get on the right side of a man when you know where his sympathies are. The passage teaches as plainly as simple language can, that we shall win the Lord's favor by interesting ourselves in those that he is interested in. If you want to make friends of a man, you know there is no better way than by making friends of his children. If we want to make a friend of Christ there is no

readier way than to make friends of those to whom his own interest and affection are particulary given. We are not going to win God's favor by the bare asking for it. Whatever notions we may happen to hold upon the matter of "effectual calling" and "divine election," we have a good deal to do in order to "make our calling and election sure." Even the doctrine of salvation by works, has a good deal to be said in its behalf, when properly interpreted. The more thoroughly our minds become saturated with the words and teachings of Christ, the more innocent his whole doctrine and dealing becomes of anything like legerdemain—anything like being tricked into the kingdom of heaven without personal co-operation on our own part.

For purposes of practical, everyday guidance, one plain thing said by the Lord is worth ten astute things said by a theologian or even by an Apostle. It is as good as told us here that God's favor is assured to us if we are interested in his interests, and our sympathies lie in the same spot of destitution, suffering, and sin, where his lie. The Lord is so surprisingly simple in what he says, that it is sometimes exceedingly difficult to take him at his word. If a man comes to me and says, What must I do in order that I may be found at the last at God's right hand (using the imagery of this chapter), it is with hesitancy that we state the case exactly as the Lord stated it here, and tell him that he will be saved if his

sympathies are with the under man, and he feeds the hungry, ministers to the sick, and looks after those that are in prison. Those of us that have been catechetically schooled, are a little afraid that it is not quite orthodox to put the matter in that way, notwithstanding the Lord does.

It is a great thing to be able to keep our orthodoxy so judiciously tethered, as not to have it nip off the tender buds that grow on the branches of the tree of life. We have been so habituated to prescribed ways of thinking about these matters, that we involuntarily discount modes of act, and modes of sympathy even, that do not issue from those ways of thinking. Unless all signs fail, there is a great change coming over the Church in this particular. Christianity is going to be more and more distinctly differenced in men's minds from theology. We are going to put a higher price on Christly living and Christly sympathy, regardless of the special modes of thinking that were their cerebral accompaniment, just as we prize a diamond whether it be an idol's eye or adorns a lady's ring, or be set in the clasp of a volume of the New Testament. All of this has been so drilled into us, that it is hard to emancipate ourselves from its thraldom; but the day of better liberty is on its way. Ten years hence, even so conservative and scholarly a Church as the Presbyterian, I venture to say, will lay less of its emphasis on intellectual processes and more on moral condition

and personal sympathies. The best disciple of Christ and the best minister of Christ will doubtless be he who best reproduces Christ in his own loves and loving activities. We are not underrating accurate thinking; but that is only means to an end; and Christ-likeness is substantially precious, however thick a bed of notional rubbish it may be inclosed withal, and the Christ-likeness will do more to dignify the rubbish than the rubbish will do to discount the Christ-likeness.

And it is noteworthy how just this aspect of the case is treated by the Lord in our story. Of those who are here represented as gathered at his right hand, it is safe to suppose that most had never seen the Lord, and it is presumable that some had never heard of him in his incarnate character; so that upon saying to them, "When I was in prison, ye visited me," they, in all accuracy of thinking, answered him, "That cannot be, for we have never seen you, perhaps not even heard of you." Whereupon he answers, "You have done it to me in doing it to them." Whether you are aware of it or not, makes no difference. The quality of the act remains the same, whether you do or do not appreciate its reach. It is the quality of your *sympathy* that counts, and not the direction in which, at the time, your *thoughts* happened to be running. We have got to remember that a great deal of current opinion about these matters is an inheritance from the scholastics, who were

a great number of them, more clear-headed than they were clean-hearted, and to whose eternal interests it would therefore be that the Lord should lay more stress on theological subtlety than on spiritual piety and evinced Christ-likeness. And the scholastic spirit in these matters is not dead yet. All we can say of it is that it is doomed; and the good Lord hasten the day of its dissolution.

There are some of us who will find a good deal of mental relief in the assurance that Christ accepts as loyalty to him, loving ministry shown to his distressed and needy brethren everywhere. No one doubts the affectionate regard which Jesus had for the woman who anointed his feet at Bethany. It is a great comfort to know that as he felt toward her, so he feels toward us whenever we come to any distressed person with ministering services involving the same quality of loving allegiance and self-sacrifice as hers.

We know what it is to love a father, mother, husband, wife, child; but it is not easy to say how much of exactly that same kind of love there is for Jesus Christ, or for God the Father, or for the Holy Spirit. Sensuous creatures that we are, our loves require some kind of sensible support. Even Christ, with all the definiteness of form in which he once appeared, is now to us either simply a memory, or, if a presence, only intangibly such. In thinking of him, there is a certain confusion and bewilderment of

thought which embarrasses the simple process and exercise of love toward him. Some experience this perplexity more keenly than others. Even John grazes close upon the edge of this difficulty when he says, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" We love better when we can see what we are loving, or, at least, when there is no element of confusion or of mystery to interrupt the even current of our love. And therefore there is encouragement in the intimation given here that our love for the distressed is counted as love for Christ. He so identifies himself with the sick and suffering, that to him it is all one whether we love him or them. He knows that if we do love them, we would love him if we could see him.

And that is not quite all there is to it. Crediting us with love to him when it is others we are loving, is not an act of "make-believe" on Christ's part. Love of the kind now under review, is a singular thing. It is in this like a mirror, that it is adapted to everything that comes in front of it, no matter what. It has a universal property, and is relevant to everything that is lovable, little or great, human or divine. The 13th of 1st Corinthians, therefore, which expatiates upon love with such wondrous beauty, says nothing about any particular direction love is to take. There is nothing specific about love to God in the chapter, nothing specific about love to man in the chapter; just as when we are talking

about light, we do not need to say the light that shines out into the spaces and gilds the stars, or the light that shines down upon the earth and transfigures the hills, or makes trembling gems out of the dewdrops. It is all one, and relevant to whatever is in its range. It is interesting, then, to notice that the New Revision reads, not "We love *him* because he first loved us," but "We *love* because he first loved us;" leaving the object indefinite, because, like light, *all* possibilities of direction are in it.

This verse of ours also endows all the poor and destitute and fallen with a certain divine dignity. If the next time you meet a poor wretch on the street you remember that Christ stands in such a relation to him, that what service of love you render to him Christ is going to consider as rendered to himself, it will not be quite so easy to turn the cold shoulder to his request or ignore his destitution. I know the chances are as a hundred to one that the man is a fraud. But let us remember these two things: the first is, that we are all of us more or less of a fraud; and second, that being fraudulent makes a man not less needy of succor, but more so. If a man is only hungry, why then ten cents' worth of bread will cover the whole case; but if he is hungry and knavish, too, it will take a great deal beside ten cents to cover the case. It was that that made redemption necessary. If the world had been merely destitute of daily food, the thing could have been by God

easily arranged. He could have supplied the races with manna as in Old Testament times, or adopted some other policy that would have been its equivalent. But it is because the genus we belong to is a genus of frauds that something beside bread was necessary, and the Son of God had to come into the world and save us by the giving to us of himself.

As the meaning of this whole story and of the ministrant life of Jesus becomes more clearly unfolded to our understandings and to our hearts, we are going to attach a wider and richer significance to the whole matter of Christian discipleship. We can only touch upon this here. The world has learned a great deal since the time when the woman at Bethany tried to attest her love to Christ by pouring something like a hundred dollars' worth of perfumery upon his feet. That is no impeachment of the beauty of spirit that prompted the expenditure. But it was lacking in reason in just about the same measure that it abounded in love. We have occasional church hymns which express practically very much the same thing that she expressed aromatically. The thing which we are coming to understand, is that loyalty to Christ means not only loyalty to his person, but loyalty to everything that he represents in the world. It means espousing him, but it means espousing his cause. The movement is in this direction, but there is need of a good deal of thorough instruction and of conspicuous example in

the matter. It was a simpler thing in the old times to observe appointed days to offer up burnt sacrifices (or *employ* some one to do it) and attend to the periodic reading of prescribed portions of Scripture, than it was to undertake the work which God has always had upon his own heart and in his own purpose of recovering the race from its untoward estate, and augmenting the opportunities of the ill-conditioned. So it is still everywhere easier to be pious than it is to be Christian; easier to attest our allegiance to Christ by methodical attendance upon his worship, stated perusal of convenient chapters of his history, repetition of devout prayers, and periodic celebration of his dying love, than to enter with heart, intelligence and power into that work of comforting, quickening, strengthening, and in all ways recovering the rear ranks of society which Christ inaugurated and champions.

To be a Christian is business as well as pleasure; it is occupation as well as luxury; it is stout performance as well as holy exercises; it is belonging to the front rank of society, but marching with the rear rank, and helping to carry the knapsack of those that are tired; it is being respectable ourselves and fostering respectability among the disreputable; it is surviving because we are fit; and it is taking those that are not fit to survive and making them fit. Loyalty to Christ means carrying forward in our century the work he began in his; not only worship-

ing him on our knees, but working with him on our feet; not only keeping up with the rush of the times and the push of necessity ourselves, but helping to keep in trim and in step some poor stragglers that have fallen out, and that have no heart and sound legs to keep up with.

And there is a distinct movement in this direction. That is the present drift of thought. Not only are the clergy preaching it, but there is among the laity a clear waking up to practical issues, a distinct sense of results to be wrought, an appreciation that the gifts conferred by Christ are not to be taken as spiritual bric-a-brac, and employed only to ornament our own souls and decorate our own future, but that they are replete with the potencies of effect, and are to become as fountains opened up in the wilderness, perennially fringed with an environment of verdure and of blossom. Men and women are getting at the distinct import of Christianity as an enterprise for the accomplishment of definite results, for the working of specific changes in the condition of men and of the times. Enlistments in this service are being continually reported of those who are making it a part of their stated business to fulfill just the offices particularized in our text; of some so circumstanced pecuniarily, that their whole time and thought are devoted to this end.

There is a gain all around in the clearness with which the work that is to be done is being appre-

ciated. And there is something in the general heart to which all such devotement urgently appeals. There is a good deal of chivalry within us when we get to where it is. A man may be selfish in his interests and confined in his purposes, but we all carry in our hearts a chord that responds to the touch of any deed of self-denying heroism. Livingstone, Gordon, Hannington and Stanley (all of them identified with the Continent of Africa) blossom in the regards of the whole civilized world by virtue of the self-sacrificing chivalry that animates them. Hardly a paper that I have taken up in the last two weeks, that has not had its tender tribute for Father Damien, the Roman Catholic priest from Belgium, who went out sixteen years ago to minister to the leper colony in the Sandwich Islands, and contracted there the same loathsome disease, from which he has just died. He added nothing to the stock of the world's information, he made no money; but he wonderfully lessened the pains of human misery, completely revolutionized in every respect that wretched community, has laid his hand in blessing upon an entire world, has thrilled with warm and tender enthusiasm every soul that has been made at all acquainted with the scope of his work and the glorious spirit that animated it, and has made the religion of Jesus mean more to the great, impatient, longing heart of our generation. The world is richer for Father Damien; the future is going to be richer for him. In the

abounding wealth of his life and heroic sweetness of his ministry, he is so much wider than any particular phase of doctrine, so much broader than any special ecclesiastical limitation, that the world cares very little what his particular Christian views were, or whether he was Protestant or Catholic. We libel him by labeling him. Damien was Christian. He satisfied the hopes of 1 Cor. xiii. and fulfilled the law of Christ.

And the world has been drawn a little nearer to Calvary, because of those sixteen years of human cross-bearing passed in the desolate leprous island of Molokai; and we, some of us, see a little more distinctly than we did before, that it is not so much by talking in set phrases *about* Christ, as it is by living in self-forgetting ministry *like* Christ, that this city, country, and world of ours, is to become a part of the kingdom of Christ.

XII

I Go A-Fishing.

I Go a-Fishing.—John xxi:3.

THE depth of a river we never estimate by the amount of water that happens to be running in it in a flush season. Any stream can easily be deep (and it denote nothing) when the snows are melting on the hill-tops, or the spring rains copiously dropping on their slopes. How much water does the river carry to the sea when only *normal* supplies are feeding it? Does the mid-channel show bare on the 15th of July?

Peter said to them: "I go a-fishing." To Peter and his colleagues it had been a strange three years; forty-two months of bewilderment; during which they had heard words the like of which had never been spoken, and seen deeds the parallel of which had never been done. The hopes of Israel had been wondrously excited by the appearance in its midst of what purported to be the Deliverer. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jewry was suspended upon the tenter-hook of a trembling patriotic expectation. The Twelve,

as standing nearest to him, looked confidently for places of preferment in the new régime of temporal domain which it was anticipated the wonderful conqueror out of Bethlehem would presently inaugurate. Had not he himself promised them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, one of you upon each throne, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In such a realistic way did all this lie in the minds of the people that the ambitious mother of two of the inner circle of the Lord's adherents begged of him that he would grant to her sons the two highest positions of power when once he was established in his kingdom. And hardly could Peter, who evidently occupied a kind of primacy in the Lord's regard, have anticipated anything less for himself than a sort of premiership in the soon-to-be-inaugurated sovereignty of Jesus Christ.

The whole trend of natural thought and of old-time purpose had thus been interrupted. The last three years stood almost in no relation with the years that had anteceded them. Those three years were like what the geologists call a "fault" in the rock, where, as the result of upheaval or subsidence the continuity of the stratum is suddenly and sharply broken, old lines of formation abruptly closed, new lines as abruptly begun. It had been with Peter

and his associates like moving into a new world. The man of Galilee had put a changed complexion upon their present, and frescoed with glowing anticipations the broadly opening future. Their thoughts had been taught to bend to a higher altitude; their affections had learned to flow toward finer and remoter ends. The wealthy significance of the times into which they had moved pressed upon and diminished the meaning of the years that had gone by. Old scenes were crowded into a shrunken and shadowed perspective. Brightened by new and fresh associations, old places and occupations had ceased to glisten with the meaning they had formerly worn. Places and employments were inscribed with a new intent. The Lake of Gennesaret, the boats, the nets, and all the fishing tackle, were fading out of their present experience, and becoming more and more a part only of other days, and an earlier chapter. All was the same, and still, how altered! It was like our going back to ground that we knew in our childhood. The rivers flow with the same current; the rocks are gray with the same moss, the hills fall off with the same slope; there is the same old dirge sung out among the night branches, the same old sigh breathed among the noontide pines; but withal it is the same, it is still quite new, for all the experience garnered since lies in our heart, eye and ear, to coat with strange confusion the old places and scenes, and mix in helpless perplexity the old

with the new. So we can imagine the disciples treading the familiar beach, looking out over the sea upon which their wild fisherman-life had been led, but with all the utensils and accompaniments of their craft made a little dim and unreal by the new life, the new associations, the new anticipations, that have sprung up between them. We can fancy Peter, in company with the Lord, stepping along by the lake-side, surveying the disused boats as they creaked one against another and chafed the beach, looking out onto the restless, wind-driven sea, and thanking the Lord that his hard old fisherman days and nights are all by. Poor Peter!

Another shake of the kaleidoscope; another jar of the firmament and forthwith another "fault" in the rock. Lines of stratification again terminate as suddenly as they began. New lines appear which are but the recurrence of the old, old lines. The Lord is dead. The days that preceded their intimacy with the Lord are back again. It is true the buried body has emerged from the grave, but a mystic distance has crept in between them and the Master with whom in times past they have consorted with so much of freedom and intimacy. They have touched him since he rose, but at the same time they have *lost touch* with him. He reappears among them on occasion, but in ways that startle and that are a bit weird, and the old constancy of easy interchange is at an end. The chapter has reached its

close. His victory over the grave has made him greater, vaster in their regard, but he has ceased to mean much to them as relates to the practicalities and business of their everyday life. They are not thinking any more about thrones and a premiership. They have got now to go on without him. Peter whose thoughts had soared highest, was the one we suppose to feel most quickly and keenly the altered prospect. The twelve are thrown back upon themselves and upon each other. The distant past reverts to them again. The three years now closed begin to seem a little unreal, dreamy. It was like waking from visionary engagements, purposes and ideals, to the hard and gritty substantials of toilsome common-place life. Old necessities assert themselves. Old pathways open out before them in stern invitation. Old occupations intrude themselves. There remains nothing for them now but to take up again the old life; and Peter said unto them, "I go a-fishing."

The pathos that is in those words of Peter can be understood only by reading imaginatively between the lines as we have just been attempting to do; or, better, can be *understood* really only by those out of whose life similarly a great hope has vanished, a bright light disappeared. Probably there are very few among us this morning whose own experience does not kindle the sad but brave words of Peter with a plaintive meaning. There are some who

come in here from Sunday to Sunday that commenced life in very ordinary not to say straitened circumstances. Their modes of life were simple and painstaking, exempt from material amenities, and yet a life that was fairly comfortable, because not personally knowing to anything that was different. In course of time, however, a brighter star arose upon them, little comforts and larger luxuries one by one began to blossom out around them on this side and on that; more commodious and more elegant quarters were secured for their occupancy, and life becomes to them a brighter, broader and more glistening thing. But no company has been organized yet that insures against reverses. Catastrophe came; investments proved themselves at fault; luxuries that had blossomed forth so beauteously, one after another were frost-nipped; the carriage was disposed of, the servants dismissed; finally the house on the avenue, the mansion on the corner, somehow slipped out of their possession; the old cramped years, the little contracted house came back again; small ways were resumed, meager satisfactions returned dressed in their old garb; the years that had intervened grew unreal, like night-dreams revived under cold sunlight; and Peter, sad, brave Peter, said to his colleagues, "Yes, the new is gone, the old is come again; the lake and the boats are back among us once more. I go a-fishing."

Very likely there is some one here whose youth,

with the advancing days, glowed with the brightness of large resolve and with the sunshine of far-reaching and wide-reaching purpose. He went on through the forenoon years of life influenced with the constant inspiration of valiant aims. The power for good and for blessing that he expected eventually to be, stirred in him with the potency of a ceaseless and a glowing motive. He lived and worked in the light of grand days that were to come and that were to be of his own producing, of chivalrous deeds not yet done that were to be of his own performing. But the sun, so splendid in its dawning, slipped presently behind a cloud. The air grew somber and heavy. A blight fell upon our hopeful young adventurer. The open doors that conducted his thought into so roomy and roseate a future swung to, and immured him in the small, meager chafing present. He fell back into his early years again; day became to him an incessant endless twilight; the few glowing years that have intervened grew unreal, like night-dreams surveyed under cold sunlight; and Peter, sad, brave Peter, said to his colleagues: Yes, the new is gone; the old is come again; the lake and the boats are back among us once more: "I go a-fishing."

Quite as likely, however, the lesson has been learned by you in still a different way: As a young man or young woman you may have emerged from the home of your early years, rich in the genial influences with which the home-atmosphere was

freighted. You gradually entered into new conditions and contracted new relations, time and decay gradually removing from beneath you, meanwhile, the parental supports upon which once your whole life was stayed, the parental lights in which once your whole life was centered. The removal of parental support, however, only lets you down more completely upon the undergirding of the new stay and staff upon which you have fixed yourself; and however loyal to parental memory, you still feel yourself fast woven into the firm fabric of a little domestic world of your own. Your companion, with perhaps a little growing pledge of conjugal affection, makes out for you a little realm of pure felicity. But, as so many of you in such circumstances have sadly known, while we have life-insurance companies without number, we have no companies that assure against death. Your home (I speak it to you whose own experience has run on in advance of my words), your home has known the agony of mortal invasion. The companion upon whom you leaned, the child upon which your long loves, hopes and aspirations have been centered, has been borrowed to beautify, against your coming, the home on high. So long as the cheek was warm with even a fading flush you felt that he was still with you and was still yours, a part of you, and of your life. And even when the pulse rested, the face so suggestive of the loved spirit that had quickened and molded it, seemed still

to prolong to you the companionship that had formed so large a part in your little domestic realm. But when the casket had been closed, and when you looked down upon the fresh mound of green turf in the churchyard, and still more when you came back to the places hallowed by sweet association and fragrant with holy *memory*—yes, "memory" is the word in which the agony is lodged—nothing to you now but a memory; no longer a part of your hourly life; the sweet years surviving like a tender melody floating in the air and melting more and more into silence; like a beautiful dream which grows more and more unreal as you review it under the cold sunlight. Nothing left you but to go back, away back and take up the old life. And Peter, sad, brave Peter, said to his companions: Yes, the new is gone, the old is all come again, the lake and the boats are back among us once more: "I go a-fishing." To some of us this language of Peter will mean more in the time to come than it has in the time past.

Now, in concluding our study, there are three points to which I desire briefly to advert: The first is that the disappearance out of his life of the new hopes and anticipations that had come to mean so much to him, let us see exactly how much there was to Peter before ever the Lord came to him and in a ministering way dealt with him and fostered and stimulated him. The spring snows have stopped melting and the April showers have ceased falling,

but the stream keeps on bearing its freight of water steadily toward the sea. There was already in him that permanent momentum of character and purpose that kept him upon his feet and kept him upon the road even after the motives that had newly come to him had ceased to act. This is part explanation of the power of Peter's life and the distinguished eminence to which the Lord elected him. He could get along comfortably with a minimum of stimulus. He was not broken down by disappointment. Peter was not frangible. He had been wonderfully wrought upon by the intimations that his three years of intercourse with the Lord had brought to him. Everything had become new to him; a new world, a new life, a new future; and yet, if it was necessary, he could go back to the old world, the old life and the old past, and take up his disused comforts, and brush up his rusted occupations and do it heartily and cheerfully. This readjustment of himself to the environment he had abandoned, and the pursuits he had outgrown and unlearned, appears more and more to be a superb feature in the fisherman. It is the more noteworthy because it marks a feature of character that is apt to be so imperfectly present in us and yet a feature so essential to everything like persistency of living and permanency of results.

It is certainly the case that in this generation of stir and excitement we are coming to depend a good

deal, for our good behavior and our beneficent dealing, upon adventitious impulse and extraneous pressure. A man is something of a curiosity now who does his duty and keeps doing it, and follows that method up year after year with nothing to hold him to it but the moral sense on his part that it is the thing for him to do—like an eight day clock that runs, ticks, strikes and keeps time at the swing of its own pendulum and the pull of its own weights. A man went up to his reward from this church three or four weeks ago, that had been doing that thing for thirty years, and we are not even yet recovered altogether from the bewilderment produced by so phenomenal a life.

Children are encouraged to expect that if they do right they will be paid for it. Adults, some of them, hardly have it occur to them to contribute to a confessedly good cause till they have had their interests wound up and their sympathies harrowed. To sit down at the beginning of the year and in a cool and at the same time generous way decide what percentage of their income they will give to the Lord, and then stand by it until the January following, as some of our fathers did, is a kind of "perseverance of the saints" that I am afraid is to a considerable degree historic. There is a certain quota in every community and in every church that will take up a duty and go along with it, with no expectation of waiting to have their interest periodically quickened, or their

enthusiasm put monthly in the coals and the bellows pumped upon it; but as to the rest, men and women, what they need as much as anything is a revival of consecutive fidelity, such that when they say they will do a thing, will do it and keep doing it; say they will help to father or mother an enterprise, will do it, and keep on doing it with enough sturdiness of purpose and momentum of character in themselves to hold them to it, even if enthusiasm does fluctuate and outward constraint work with varying tension.

Two points more in a word: Peter was, in part, able to go back in a cheerful way to his humdrum fisherman life and get along without his Lord, because of what the Lord while still with him had been to him and done for him. Just because he had been so much to Peter, Peter was the better able to do without him. And that exactly is the best thing that blessings in general can do for us—qualify us to dispense with them; like the support upon which a young tree reclines which fulfills its office by making the tree independent of its support. Almost nine years ago it was said to you that Dr. Adams had done so much for this church that he was not indispensable any longer. Peter could cheerily draw the nets again upon the sea because of the new resources of strength and courage that had been developed in intercourse with his Lord upon the land. Many a son and daughter of you know what it is to

be able to stand up strong and self-reliant, after father and mother have gone, by virtue of the enrichment and invigoration which they produced in you while still with you. I have in my mind now the case of a bereft mother who certainly is able in part to survive the death of her son because of the manly fiber wrought in her by his chivalrous personality so long as the precious intimacies of the home life were still vouchsafed them. Any finite thing that we cannot do without is either a poor thing, or has not rendered to us its complete service.

But, in fine, as we have found in our morning's chapter from St. John, the curtain which had fallen is lifted again; the Lord who had withdrawn himself from the view of Peter reappears to him amid the tasteless endeavors of the toilsome sea, and back in the old humdrum life of a fisherman the divine voice reaches him, the divine presence greets him, and standing up upon the beach the Lord speaks to him ordaining words that set him apart forever to a wider, higher life and a grander ministry. Such is the benediction which rests upon walking in the twilight. Such is the way in which the Lord quietly teaches us that if we lose him in our great hopes and our large expectations there is no surer way of recovering him than to step down from our high estate upon a simple pathway of everyday duties done faithfully, patiently and as cheerfully as we can. To those of you who are in sorrow, to whom old

places and scenes and duties have lost their savor, I pray you to keep near the example of our poor fisherman; adjust yourself to the altered circumstances, take up again the old life, and may its lonesome inconspicuous duties done patiently prove to you likewise an avenue along which shall reach you the presence and the greeting of the Lord.

XIII

How Much Is a Man Better Than a Sheep!

How Much, then, is a Man Better than a Sheep!—Matthew xii:12.

NOT a question, although our version marks it so. Exclamation rather. The context requires that, and it is so punctuated in the New Revision.

This feature of the verse needs notice. These are the Lord's words, and exclamation is rare with him in the extreme. The reason is not far to seek. Our exclamations indicate that we are ourselves overwhelmed with the thing we are attempting to tell, which as a rule the Lord is not. It is one of the tokens of his divineness that he can say great things without himself becoming perturbed, or his sentences made nervous. We are soon heated when we attempt to tell a great matter and our phrases creak under the weight we lay upon them. We are less than the load we lift and so are bent under it. Not so the Lord, usually. Which makes it all the more to be remarked that in our verse his mind does seem to be struggling with its own thoughts, and his words

restive under the tax put upon them. All of which throws a side-light on the far-reaching fact involved, and only adds more of embarrassment to us in our attempts to approach to it.

"How much, then, is a man better than a sheep!" Our reading of this exclamation is not appreciative till we realize that in it the Son of Man was not propounding a theory but uncovering an experience. He is hinting here at what he knew. It is man that is speaking. "He knew what was in man"—was conscious of himself; we are not. I do not know what we should say if we could understand all that it means to be man. Almost every one probably has times when he stands in awe of himself. Christ utters no word anywhere that cheapens man. He exhorts to humility, but humility is a symptom of dignity—its aroma. The sheep does not kneel. The Lord knelt. Christ prayed—felt upon him the pressure of the overshadowing. Humility is greatness seen along its nether edge.

I am not afraid to eulogize man. Conceit is one thing; sense of worth a distinct thing. The two take cognizance of different matters. My conceit occupies itself with what I *have* that is *different* from others; my sense of worth occupies itself with what I *am* in *common* with others. Conceit, therefore, separates men, while just sense of worth only draws them more closely together. Hence where there is the largest self-respect there will be always

the largest and gentlest respect for other people. Once in a while we are a surprise to ourselves; are stirred at times by what we seem to get upon the track of when we take deep, quiet counsel with our own hearts. We appear to be upon the edge of something. Every soul has what it calls its grand moments. A sort of refraction appears for an instant to throw above our horizon lights that are not yet risen. The deeper our descent the higher our rise. Here, as in astronomy, "up" and "down" are more a difference of standpoint than of fact. "Commune with your own heart and be still," said David.

Thorough entrance into ourselves is at the same time a reverent drawing nigh unto God. The heart is the primitive temple, the first holy of holies. Coming to himself was the prodigal's first step toward coming to his father. At the bottom of the heart man and God meet and mingle. Consciousness of self, deepened and prolonged, slips into consciousness of God as naturally as dawn ripens into day. It was when the storm and the earthquake were by, and Elijah's face was wrapped in his mantle and his heart closeted in still conference with itself that the Lord's voice became evident to him saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" That one consciousness holds both God and man in a single commingled revelation is a long chapter in the lesson of man's meaning and dignity that you may better be left to think out in detail for yourselves.

We shall suffer more from laying upon ourselves too low an estimate than one that is too high, if indeed overestimation be possible. Man is as much of a mystery as God is. Theology and psychology are sisters. To think meanly of ourselves is a long step towards becoming mean. Crushing a man's self-respect is pretty nearly the same thing as crushing the man. I know, there is the example of the publican, self-condemnatory, as was meet; smiting upon his breast; would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven and saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. Yes, only we want to take it for *all* that it means. To me it is one of the most superb exhibits of human magnificence on record. A miserable sinner, and yet addressing God Almighty in the imperative mood. Sunken in crime of some kind and still with such a sense of worth as emboldened him to pray, and as gave him courage to expect that God still esteemed him enough to notice his prayer, attend to it and give him what he asked. So worthless that he needed to pray; so precious that it was of some use to pray. Men's estimate of God will maintain a certain proportion with their estimate of themselves. Even shadows keep a certain ratio with the objects that cast them. Christianity gives us a deepened sense of human worth, and through that deepened sense of human worth we reach a higher sense of God's worth, and theology is bound to expand along the brightening lines of the human self-conscious-

ness; and the Gospel and humanity play backward and forward upon one another, like the sun which brightens the eye so that it can see the sun; like the stars which wake up the eye so that it can find more of the stars.

Even sin, too, has about it something that in this matter is pleasantly suggestive. It is better to be a man that sins than a sheep that can't. A man's moral corruption is index of the native moral grandeur of the man; just as the wealth of weeds in a field equally with the wealth of wheat in the same field measures the potency and richness of the soil. The strength of the spring can be calculated as well by the distance which the pendulum swings to the left of the perpendicular as by the distance of its swing to the right. There is the same degree of sinfulness in a sin as there is of personal worth in the man that commits it. Here, too, the shadow keeps a ratio with the object that casts it, and the blackness of the shadow will vary with the brightness of the sunshine that gets excluded.

A man can be only as devilish actually as he is saintly potentially. We should *infer* that Satan was *created* to be an angel of light even if we had not been told it. Only the organic can putrefy, not the inorganic. Tarnish is correlative only with luster and stain with whiteness. Hence all that Scripture so emphatically says of man's sinfulness is at the same time a tacit tribute to his native worth;

and we can appreciate the import of a saving Gospel only in the degree in which we first appreciate the height *from* which man has fallen as well as the depth *to* which he has fallen. It is important that men should be saved because there is so much for them to be saved *to* as well as so much for them to be saved *from*.

There is in man also a certain power to transcend limitations that gives him just a flavor of infinitude. The spirit chafes under restraints; has a sense continually of something outside that it has not yet gotten to; makes for itself a larger and larger world; stretches itself back in memory and forward in surmise. We are like the bird in the cage that is kept inside the bars, but lives in continuous communication with the air and light without, as though animated still with a sense of freedom that has been forgotten. The Shinarites built into the air. The giants piled Ossa on Pelion. Everything is to us small because there is a larger; everything partial because there is a whole. Assurance continually runs ahead of verification. Everything that gets in our way is felt by us almost as an impropriety and an indignity.

In one way the earth is larger than we, in others it is a great deal smaller. It is compelled to loan itself to our service. Mind masters matter. We tame and harness the forces of nature and put them to our work. The sea that separates the continents is

made over into a highway to connect them. We play off the energies of nature upon each other and set the mountain torrent to boring a roadway through the very mountain it flows off from. We rub out distance and talk through the air to Chicago, and tie our letters to the lightning and post them under the sea to London, Constantinople and Calcutta. Pent in the body we are, and yet domiciled in all the earth; a sort of adumbration of omnipresence.

In the same way thought gets into the sky, slips around upon the ocean of space from star to star as easily as a birch canoe among the islands of any mundane archipelago; finds out what has been transpiring in the heavens for a million years; fixes latitudes and longitudes of suns a thousand years away as the light flies; learns their secrets, weighs them, measures them, exacts from them their biography and their kinships; reads in the star-beams the story of stellar composition; finds the unity that pervades the whole; translates the phenomena of the heavens into terms of terrestrial event; gets at the language in which all the worlds unconsciously think, the lines along which they instinctively act. It is grander to *think* a world than to *be* a world. To be able to conceive of a universe is fraught with richer sublimity than to *be* a universe. We rejoice in the great created world. It pleased God when he had made it, and it pleases us because our tastes

are like his. We can discover the laws which work in it. A natural law is a divine thought. In detecting and threading those laws, then, we are following where God's mind has gone on before. Mind can construe only what mind constructs, and only when the mind that construes *matches* the mind that constructs. In this way nature is a mirror that shows both God's face and our own; and scientific truth is only religious truth secularly conceived.

It is rather in the line of this to say besides that we are persuaded how great a thing it is to be man, by observing the ease with which man can receive a divine revelation. If we are to save the idea of revelation in its integrity, it must be either by the dignification of man or the belittlement of God. The two, man and God, will have by some means to be understood as standing to one another within intelligent reach. We shall be obliged either to be guilty of anthropomorphism and conceive of God as only a huge-proportioned man, or we shall be driven to the alternative necessity of conceiving of man under the figure of a little God, what Cicero calls "a mortal God;" if you please, a son of God, with all that that word son can reasonably import. Such belief as we have in a divine revelation is a confession of faith on our part that God's thought can in certain cases be translated into the terms of man's thought without God's thought parting with any of its essential truthfulness.

For example, when we are divinely told, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy," if that is revelation, if there is any *revealment* in it, we shall have to understand that the thought which is started in our minds by that expression answers truthfully to the thought in God's mind which occasioned that expression. There is risk in saying that a truth is adapted to our minds— that a divine truth is taken and then adjusted to our finite powers of apprehension. It is an easy thing to say but a mischievous one, and spoils everything in the revelation-idea that is worth saving. A truth is not a thing that can be adjusted. You cannot adjust a key to a lock without changing the key. Nor can you adjust a truth to the mind without changing the truth, and truth changed ceases to be truth. So that if the truth fits into the wards of my mind as the key does into those of the lock, it is not because the truth has been reshaped or reduced till it fits my mind, but because my mind is so constructed as to receive the truth without any such reshaping or reduction ; it is because my mind is so in the image of God's mind and so duplicates it that there is between them an essential identity in operation and appreciation. It is not truth to me except to the degree in which I see it and feel it exactly as God sees it and feels it. There is no more truth in a truth incorrectly apprehended than there is in a lie correctly apprehended.

All of which possesses the fact of a real divine revelation with intensest interest. The doctrine of a *bona fide* revelation from God consists with only one or the other of two alternatives: either that Godhood is in that particular a superior order of manhood, or that manhood is in that particular an inferior order of Godhood. That God's mind and my own can to a degree actually appreciate the same truths establishes between him and myself so far forth relations most immediate and intimate; just as the child to the degree in which he appreciates his father's word is the duplicate of his father, whether you prefer to call manhood a superior order of childhood, or childhood an inferior order of manhood. Now all of this is a matter for reflection during our reading of God's Word. As our minds slide along the lines there drawn for them, we shall need often to recall the fact that precisely these truths God has thought over before us; that our minds are traveling in the path his mind has worn. All of this will give to us a thrilling experience of his nearness to us, and of ours to him, quicken in us a keen sense of the favors with which he has honored us, the dignity with which we are natively endowed.

Still it is not the fact that there *can* be a divine revelation so much as it is what that divine revelation contains that does most to convince us of the dignity inherent in our nature. The central object of Scripture is the Cross, and that Cross proves two

things—God's hatred of sin and God's esteem for the sinner, and God's esteem exactly matches man's worth. Whoever cheapens man belittles the Cross, and makes crucifixion a waste of divine blood. Man's worth explains redemption, not redemption man's worth. Calvary is man's eulogy written by God in characters of his own life-crimson. We could reach a just estimate of man if once we could comprehend what it denotes for God really to be grieved and to suffer on our account. There is a logic in redemption which gets badly strained by man's indiscriminate self-derogation.

There are two ways of saving the logic: one is by making Christ less than divine; the other is by making man more than what Watts in his familiar hymn calls a "worm." We can understand how God in his infinitude can take care of us. He takes care as well of the sheep and the sparrows. That gives us little basis of inference. No expense is involved. But when we come to the matter of God's enduring pain on our account we are on different ground and beneath a different sky. This matter of God's heartache it is next to impossible for us really to get under the power of. If we but could, it would set so many things right with us both in doctrine and life. We are taxed and tortured by the effort to conceive how God ever could lovingly impoverish himself for the sake of man that he had at one time made out of nothing. It sets us wondering whether that is really

a fair account of the matter, whether we are the product of mere manufacture, whether immortality forward of us has not in some way its anterior complement. The Bible is full of genealogy. A man's age cannot be with nice precision stated. The son is in a deep sense his father prolonged. "Who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the Son of God." History is a long thing; so is life. Was there, then, a time when the human spirit began to be? Who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God. Sonship is a profound matter. Mystery lies close about us. "The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it." We must have the courage to glance out sometimes into new avenues of thought, even if we have not the hardihood to tread those avenues to their issue.

> "The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home."

Which is not inspired, perhaps, but slips easily into our thought in the wake of that quotation from Ecclesiastes—"And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

And the Calvary sorrow of God has a farther reach

of effect in this respect when it is contemplated by us as the instant betrayal of a permanent grief. The transaction about and upon the cross is the coming into history of redemptive suffering that lies both backward and forward of the Man of Nazareth. It is the breaking into view over Jerusalem of a brief patch of the same blue that behind the clouds compasses the whole canopy of the sky from horizon to horizon. It is the temporal display of God's eternal heartache for his children. And to calculate our own meaning we should have to take the compass of such a sorrow and render it into terms of human value, for we are sure that the regard of the heavenly Father never falls out of equipoise with the worth of the heavenly child. With God is no mistaken affection and no blundering esteem. It is this which gives daily a new interest to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is strewn with hints of the way in which God was exercising himself in ripening his scheme of redemption. It shows how close, all the way along, we have been lying to God's earnest thought and grieved regard.

If we will let this side-light fall upon these old parts of the Bible I do not see how our interest in its pages can ever weary or falter. It is an old record; but it is an old record of to-day's heavenly Father. It is like the uplift of the ancient mountains which still give us fresh hints of the mystic grandeur of

the globe from which they protrude. It is like the beaming of the old stars which still flash upon us revelations of the celestial vault in which they cluster. It is all of it a continuous variation upon the theme set down for us in the prophecy of Isaiah: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." And when we prolong our backward view past Bethlehem not only and the prophets, but past Sinai and Egypt and the Great River and the Flood and Eden and the first Dawn, the last thing the eye meets down the aisle of the unrecorded ages is still the cross, and "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." In that sadly sublime suggestion, away out at the last end of Scripture, we can feel more than we can think. But our heart keeps coming back to it. "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world;" it touches us at a point within where consciousness has hardly reached yet. There is in it a reservoir of meaning that keeps all the lowlands of Scripture in continuous inundation. Before the world was founded we were close to God's thought, and he suffered for us already with anticipative suffering. The cross was in the air before Zion had been reared or Golgotha fashioned.

What is man! At the impulse of an infinite suffering and in the fellowship of an eternal cross we

are prepared to allow to thought widest range and to imagination freest flight. "What is man," O God! "that THOU art mindful of him and the son of man that THOU visitest him!"

XIV

Partakers of the Divine Nature.

"Whereby Are Given Unto Us Exceeding Great and Precious Promises, that by these Ye Might be Partakers of the Divine Nature."—2 Peter i: 4.

"PARTAKERS of the divine nature"—that is enough for a text. I do not know how much we can make out of it, but God grant that it may make something out of us. It is waste of time now to take the text and spin it out into fine threads. You are certain to spoil a cocoon in the process of working it over into skein-silk. "Partakers of the divine nature!" Never mind what the Greek of it is. That is the English of it, and English-speaking people will have to be saved by an English-speaking Gospel. Never mind what Alford, Lightfoot, or the schoolmen think or have written about it. There is something great here, and we want to leave it great. Some things have to be minced in order to reduce to use. Corn must be ground before it can become meal and make bread. But the mountains must be let alone. A wide, thrilling landscape wants no comment but a warm eye, no picture-frame but the sky.

Language has a pretty hard stint when it tries to tell us the great things of the Gospel. Words though written by a pen dipped in fire and manipulated by a Spirit-anointed Evangelist, cannot show us wide matters when we are looking with narrow eyes. He that hath ears to hear let him hear. He that hath eyes to see let him see. Words do not show us things, they tell us where to look for them. This Gospel even does not give us the heavens, but it is a God-wrought telescope, at the eye piece of which we can kneel down and look up into the heavens. Christianity is to me what I see in the heavens when looking through this telescope. When I am blind I will take some one's else description of the celestial field and the constellations that blossom along its furrows; but till then give me God's telescope and God's stars, and away with your pictures, your charts and your diagrams.

"Partakers of the divine nature!" Our look, then, this morning is at something that needs a long sweep of the eye. Habits of microscopic inspection will be fatal to all attempts at a range so remote and cloud-piercing. Men who spend nine-tenths of their time polishing needles and counting the lenses in a fly's eye will not accomplish much the other tenth trying to interpret the handwriting of God on the sky. Small looking makes small seeing, and *myopia*, when so induced, wipes out the superlative splendors both of a man's astronomical and his spiritual firmament.

Our verse will at least give aim to our vision, and although it may lie away out like a patch of star-mist in the untraveled spaces, yet perhaps it will grow upon our eye and take a little more shape before our eye, although even unresolved, and indeed unresolvable star mist, floating in the cosmic distances, is a million times fuller of thrill than the same mist condensed into drops, and represented by ink-spatters in white on your study-table.

"Partakers of the divine nature," which is to say taking part in the divine nature. Not simply like God, but in a way *share*-holders in him; something possibly as the waves of the sea are partakers in the sea; something it may be as the leaves of a tree share in the life of the tree. Not that we attach great value to such parables save as they give the thought an upward incline. We are not afraid of widening out the area of our humanity along the line of its upward frontier. It is childish for one who happens to know a little more than his neighbor to boast of his superiority to his neighbor; but it is another thing for a man to be intelligently and gratifiedly conscious of that in himself which he has in common with his neighbor, and in common with all his neighbors. It is the difference between self-conceit and self-respect. The little differences between us make us conceited; the wide and profound fundamentals of our common nature are the grounds of our self-respecting.

Man differs in one very peculiar regard from the

brute; not only in moving in a higher range of life and experience, but in not being tethered to any fixed condition. The brute is a brute, and always a brute. Improve your dog, and he will still be brutal. Debase your dog, and he will still be brutal, and evince no symptoms of dropping to a lower grade of being. However miserable he may be as a dog, he will still be a perfect dog, and give no indication of degenerating to the inferior nature of a vegetable or a mineral. The dog is tied to his conditions; he can neither apostatize from *caninity*, nor be trained nor recreated into humanity. He stays where he is put. Once a dog, always a dog!

On the contrary, there is a just sense in which you can say of humanity, that it is not so much a condition, as it is a position of poise between two alternative conditions. It is like standing at the half-way point on the Gemmi Pass in Switzerland. You look down to the profound depths beneath you, or you turn and look up to the superb heights above you, but you are not going to stop there, nor to live there. There is no house at the spot. It is not a place to remain, but a place from which to look off. You are either on your way down the Pass to Leuker-Bad, or you are on your way up the Pass to the Wild-strübel; it is merely a position of poise between two alternative destinations.

A good deal of the same thing we can say about our humanity, and by our humanity I mean the gen-

eral complex of powers and possibilities that we bring with us into our life here. We have not so much a sense of fixity, as we have presentiment of destiny. We are at a looking-off place. There are no conveniences for remaining where we are. The longer we wait, the more distinctly we feel that we must go. Conflicting impulses may draw us both ways, but that cannot continue indefinitely. We shall have to choose between the two, and follow our choice. Every man knows how near he is to being a brute; and every man knows how near he is to the alternative destiny. A frontier line touches both countries. Humanity is a kind of water-shed, off from which the rivers all flow, and flow to opposite points of the compass We look down as far as we can, and call the indistinguishable bottom hell; we look up as high as we can, and call the indistinguishable summit heaven. Hell is humanity slipped down the Pass till it has become bestial. Heaven is humanity climbed up the Pass till it attains to the divine. That is the geography of the three worlds. All written religions have portrayed it, because every human heart has felt itself *in transitu*, and has had a sense of alternative destinies. I address myself in this, not to your interpretation of Scripture, but to your interpretation of your own minds. Scripture is written on a ruled page, and the lines to which even the inspired pen conforms itself, are such as are first laid down in the general consciousness of the race.

Ye are partakers of the divine nature. Our thought to-day is particularly up the Pass, not down. There is more danger in a theology that differences man from God than in one which assimilates man to God. There is as a rule, more quickening stimulus in the prospect of victory than there is in the danger of defeat. Few men ever become great through fear of remaining small. There is more incentive in trying to get to the top of the class than in trying to keep away from the bottom of it.

The Hebrew economy, as recorded for us in the Old Testament Scriptures, plays indeed an important part in the history of the Christian idea. But in those old times it was the ineffable holiness and the inaccessible greatness of God that was steadily advertised. Men were not encouraged to draw nigh unto God. All the arrangements of the Hebrew system discouraged everything of the kind. All the dramatic accompaniments of divine manifestation (as the giving of the law) were suggestive of nothing so much as of the unconquerable distance that separated between God and his people. The provisional purpose in all this it would not be difficult to state; but the fact that just now concerns us, is that so long as this relation of things lasted, men never began to become God-*like*. There is no incentive to the effort to draw nigh to one of whom the only thought we have is that he is absolutely unapproachable; or to become like one of whom the chief thing we have

been told, is that he is absolutely inimitable. In this respect, as well as in some others, the New Testament marks a distinct advance in the history of religious unfolding. Having been taught for thousands of years that God is unspeakably holy, and ineffably high and lifted up, Christ comes and says, "But then that need not hinder your coming close to him, and holding fellowship with him." There is a great deal in having a prospect; and when Christ came and gave men a prospect, and taught them that there was no absurdity and no profanity in their seeking after God withal he was so holy, and walking with him withal he was a heaven-enthroned God, they became great enough for the act, and in the act were made like him.

We must not abate (I am afraid we do to a certain extent), but we ought not to abate the old Hebrew habit of celebrating the glory and majesty of God. We enfeeble our religious life and pauperize our devout loyalties when we embrace with our reverent regards only those divine properties that scatter through the fine-meshed sieve of our affections. Tone and strength are by this means sacrificed. It is the "*majestic* sweetness," it is the *regal* loveliness of our God to which we are invited, to whose contacts we have admission guaranteed us, the very effect of which contacts it is to have the communication of his own divineness made over to us, the reproduction of his own eternal spirit consummated within us.

This matter of knowing God and of being in fellowship with him is wide and wonderful. There are rich and startling depths of meaning contained in it; and the meaning we must not be afraid of, nor shrink to stand by. We will look a moment in this direction and let come what will.

Our philosophers object to what is, in rather a schoolish way, called "anthropomorphism," that is, the habit of representing God as possessed of modes and features of being that belong to man. Now we do that, and so long as we continue to do that we must be prepared for the consequences; we must be prepared to confess that the human and the divine have that in common which makes common terms admissible; that there is a point where the two easily touch so that there is no telling where one leaves off and the other begins; a point, a good many of them perhaps, so belonging to both, that whether you call them human or call them divine, will depend on preference and taste. This is no place to dwell on the metaphysics of the matter. We are only trying to bring our own thoughts into beat with the rhythm of thought as it evinces itself all the way through the Gospel. It comes out in the conception which the Gospel gives us of Jesus Christ. You can call him human; you can call him divine: most of us call him both; and when we call him both and name him a divine man, our idea is not that part of him is one, and a part the other, and the two parts bound by some non-

descript Siamese ligament, but that humanity at its best, and divinity under limitation, are in such way identical that they can justly bear either name.

We are not trying to explain incarnation; we are only trying to see what it is that we, who believe in incarnation, really assent to in believing it. We assent to it that divinity and humanity are to such degree identical, that the founder of our religion could be both inside of one homogeneous personality: something as you can draw two circumferences in such a way as to have them intersect each other, and a part of the contained area, therefore, belong at the same time to both circles. We are not attempting to gain so clear-cut a conviction of this matter, that we can make a memorandum of it in our diary. We are simply trying to look in the right direction—in the direction indicated by our verse—and to let what hangs in the air imprint itself on our eyes in its own way.

Now that God has become man (an idea familiar to the religions of the world elsewhere as well as in Christendom), now that the divine has once become human without ceasing to be divine, all necessary distinction between the two declares itself rubbed out. Now see what follows. If God can humanize the divine to the point of its becoming man, as in the instance of Jesus, what is to hinder him, in the exercise of the same Omnipotence, from deifying man to the point of his becoming divine? It is no

farther from the bottom of the mountain to the top than it is from the top to the bottom. Now that, my friends, as we read the Gospel, is exactly what the blessed spirit is trying to do with us. God became like us that we might become like God. He is seeking to lead us back over the same road that he came down. Sanctification the reverse of incarnation! Never mind definitions; we are looking in the right direction. "Partakers of the divine nature."

"Now are we the sons of God." It is all in that word "sons." *There* is community through identity. You cannot get sonship in any other way. You may spend a score of years fashioning marble into expressions of your own ideals of beauty and grace, but those statues it would scarcely occur to you to call your sons and your daughters. Sonship and fellowship come only from being shareholders in one common life. Christ was not the creature of God, but the Son of God, only because he and his father were one. The dog on the hearth-rug! The boy on his father's lap! One and the same life looks from the father's eye into the son's eye, and from the son's eye into the father's eye. Mystery? There is mystery everywhere. We are only looking at the star-mist out in the wide spaces.

Of course we have made bungling work in telling this. Even great Paul did, and strained his sentences almost to the point of breaking, as when he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." There is

more *between* the lines of the Bible than there is *in* the lines. We spend a good deal of time trying to understand what the Bible does say; we might profitably spend a little time every day in trying to understand what the Bible does *not* say. It is generally the case that things are discovered by attempting to see a little more than is visible, going out to the end of the longest and highest promontory and looking off.

In such expressions as that just quoted from Paul, wherein he says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," it needs no great discernment to see that he does not intend only to say that his life and experience are being managed by the control of divine influence, as a vessel is driven by the wind or thrust forward by the tide. To the degree in which we read down into the substance of the matter, we feel that there was that blending between himself and the divine Spirit, that it was all one whether he said he acted, or said that God acted in him. For a little distance frontier lines were erased. The same territory belonged to both circles. I do not make my meaning clear; my meaning is not clear to myself. But there is something great here, and we would rather see a mountain-slope afar off, than to own and fence a little patch of that slope, and be able to plant a few hills of corn upon it.

A loyal son is governed by his father; but it is the best element of that loyalty, not that the son does

what the father bids him do, or makes him do, but that the son has his father's spirit so reproduced in himself, and so become a part of himself and he so a partaker in his father's nature, that his one act is at the same instant both his act and his father's act. And when we pray that God will control us by his Spirit, we certainly hardly expect that he is going to put his personality behind us, so as to push us onward; or put his personality in front of us, so as to hold us backward. We would rather mean, would we not, that as children of his, we are bound in the bundle of one life with him, moving therefore at the impulse of energies that are ours without their ceasing to be his—somewhat perhaps as each separate storm-wave rolls in the expression of its own might, which is at the same time a part of the might of the sea; somewhat perhaps as each separate leaf or branch grows green in the expression of its own life, which is at the same time a part of the life of the vine. This last is the Lord's illustration, not ours. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I in you, you in me. Frontier lines gone. One in each other. A single bundle of life, human or divine, *either* or both; a shareholder in God; *up* the Gemmi Pass toward the indistinguishable summit!

XV

Defensive Armor.

Wherefore, Take Unto You the Whole Armor of God That Ye May be Able to Withstand in the Evil Day, and Having Done All, to Stand—Ephesians vi:13.

OUR text introduces St. Paul's description of the Christian armor. The foregoing verse portrays with a good deal of spirit the forces of evil with which our life battle has to be fought; and the four verses that come after specify in detail the equipment in which those forces are to be met and antagonized: viz, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God."

That completes the Christian armament. Now, it would be strange if, from the general character of the armament, we were not able to infer something as to the purposes and methods of the warfare in which

that armanent is to be employed. Each variety of battle demands its correspondent variety of weapon. When you are told that Krupp's guns are being gotten in position you understand that it is a matter of bombardment and long range. Musketry warfare is between infantry forces so disposed that each man becomes an easy target to his antagonist. "Fixed bayonets" puts us thinking upon close combat, and hand-to-hand scrimmage. The kind of weapon denotes the methods and purposes of the combatants. When David went forth to meet Goliath you easily infer, both from what he took and what he omitted to take, what sort of a duel it was that he was intending to fight with the old Philistine. David wore no mail, carried no shield and equipped himself only with a sling. Evidently he purposed to take the initiative, act on the offensive, be the attacking party, stand out of range of Goliath's weapons, and anything like defensive armor on his own part would be, therefore, superfluous. Already, before the battle, we read David's methods and purposes distinctly in his equipment, and understand as fully at the beginning as we do at the end that he has nothing to do with warding off the blows and thrusts of his adversary, but that his whole mode and animus, on the contrary, is one of offense.

Now, has it occurred to you to infer from St. Paul's description of the Christian armor anything

as to the method and character of the Christian warfare? As described in our chapter, the equipment is made up of six pieces—the girdle, the breastplate, the sandals, the shield, the helmet and only, last and sixth, the sword—five pieces of defensive armor to one piece offensive.

Now, that is our point—five pieces defensive to one piece offensive; from which we easily derive it as our topic for the morning that successful Christian warfare consists, primarily, not in destroying the evil or the devil, but in preventing his destroying us; not in assaulting him, but in showing ourselves competent to keep our feet under his assaults; that patience rather than aggression is our prime business; and that active talents of achievement are only one-fifth as necessary as passive graces of endurance.

If we are much at home with our hearts we are aware that not to be defeated is already a good deal of a victory, and that to do no more than to stand our ground and hold our own requires a moral genius of a very stubborn and heroic and military cast. The first impulse of heroism is in the direction of aggression—driving the enemy back, advancing our own lines of fortification, widening our own area of occupation. In general, fighting means with us, first of all, seizing a sword and brandishing it or a musket and firing it. That was what it meant to Peter back at our Lord's betrayal. Peter

was brave with the sword, but it is not so hard to be brave with the sword as it is to stand quietly in the face of the enemy and be brave underneath the shield and the helmet. Peter was courageous enough to try to drive back the enemy, but a few hours later he was not courageous enough to stand his ground while the enemy tried to drive him back; and he went out and wept bitterly to think how little of a hero, with all his sword-brandishing, he really was. He was brave enough to thrust, but hadn't the courage simply to stand and parry; could *do*, but could not *endure*; could *act*, but could not *bear*.

Simply enduring is our hardest work and our toughest fight. And this is strongly expressed and illustrated in all our Lord's life and work and precept. In every respect Jesus Christ contradicts the current drift of opinion and approbation. He was a sad and continuous disappointment to his disciples, and one of whom even now many of his followers are not altogether proud. He does not fall in with popular prepossessions. He has not that in him which answers to what we applaud in conspicuous men of our own times. The more like Jesus a man or woman may be to-day the less chance he would stand of celebrity. Were he to reappear in New York, he would suffer substantially the same treatment he received in Jerusalem. There is some uncertainty as to what kind of reception would be

accorded him even by the churches. If we knew that it was Jesus perhaps we should throng around him; but, not knowing that it was he, if he taught the same doctrine of meekness that he used to teach, and lived the same life of unaggressive endurance and unresisting patience that he used to live, he would not count for much—not with us.

I doubt if any ambitious congregation in this city would call him to their pulpit, or if many residences along our avenues would be opened to him in hospitality. He did not fulfill the American idea of smartness; he did not "get on in the world." He simply stood and took what was given him; bore what was laid upon him. That was his victory. His greatest act was in letting himself be unresistingly taken and crucified. He did nothing that contemporary peoples heard anything about or that contemporary history made any note of. The thing that distinguishes him is not that he did anything with the devil, but that he did not let the devil do anything with him. At the end of thirty-three years he said: "The prince of this world hath nothing in me," no point at which he can trip me, no place in me at which my strength is not matched to his assaults. We estimate men according to the amount of pressure which they can *exert;* Christ estimates himself according to the amount of pressure which he can *sustain.* "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he

threatened not." "He was oppressed and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

So that if we take our cue from him it will be quite as pertinent to ask—not how big a thing can I do without breaking, but how heavy a burden can I bear without crushing. How much in the shape of trial, disappointment, insinuating temptation, small provocation, little stinging exasperation can I suffer and still be kept quiet, gentle and patient under it all? That is not the popular standard of estimate, and it is occasion of considerable disheartenment sometimes to reflect how small a way we have gone yet in adopting into practical usage Christ's own criterion of judgment. We "believe in Christ," and we are, I suppose, measurably sincere in saying it; but what is this "belief," and what does it comprise? We "believe in Christ," but is it not the fact with us that we do not quite believe in any overwhelming way in men that are like him? We do not love most the things which he loved most, nor feel nor evince supreme regard for the things which he prized and honored above anything else.

We have been hearing in these days a deal about the "New Theology" and about the "readjustment" of our doctrinal symbols. I do not so much care whether it is new theology or old theol-

ogy; whether it is readjusted theology or unadjusted theology, or no theology at all. Both as relates to myself and to my congregation I am a good deal less concerned about heresy in doctrinal opinions than I am about heresy in practical everyday aims and admirations, and there is no kind of revival for which we need more fervently to pray than a revival that shall give us readjusted affections, so that we shall love the things which the Lord loved, and estimate most highly the things which he estimated most highly, and prize the people about us according to the criteria that dominated his judgments, and adopt into our own daily practical life the aims and the principles that ruled his life.

If you will think of it, the Lord did not *do* a great deal while he was on the earth. His ministry lasted only about three years, and even during that time he went about his business in a very leisurely and deliberate way. A good many of you do more in one day than he did in a week. Alexander the Great died at just about the age of Jesus, thirty-three, and if you estimate lives by the public exhibition that they make of themselves and the evident and instant results that they afford and the palpable effect that they put forth, Alexander did far more in his thirty-three years than the Lord did in his, and the record of his doings makes a more voluminous and more readable history; and we shall never understand the Lord's life, nor read its record appreciа-

tively till we have learned that to endure patiently is greater and harder and holier than to do magnificently.

Entrance into the kingdom is through the gateway of our power to bear, and not of our power to achieve. There occurs in the first chapter of the Revelations a singular expression—one of many instances in which Scripture with seeming delight puts as close together as possible words that appear almost to contradict one another. It is in the ninth verse of the first chapter of Revelations where John says: "I am your companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." "*Kingdom* and *patience*, of Jesus Christ"—words that seem first off to neutralize each other. As we look at it, it is not the king but the subject that has to exercise the patience. Holding up our common notions in front of Christianity is like suspending printed words before a mirror—they all come back into our eye reversed. John seems to say that it was exactly in the superlativeness of his endurance that Christ's true kingliness existed and demonstrated itself, and that it is by our possession of the same genius of patience that we become members in his kingdom.

This certainly is true—which we can all understand—that it requires more holiness and more interior vigor simply to keep quiet under temptation or any kind of provocation, than it does to

project ourselves into some form of pronounced and conspicuous activity. Suffering costs more grace than acting. Action stimulates activity. Exertion gives us a sense of power. The greater the thing we do the more conscious we become of faculty. We are stimulated sometimes by our own deeds just as orators are inspired by their own eloquence. When great Christian undertakings are achieved, what passes as the aid and stimulus of the Holy Spirit may be only the intoxication due to the effervescence of our *own* spirits. A great enterprize thrills our *powers* of enterprize, so that they are at their best. An extraordinary man can therefore do more easily an extraordinary thing than an ordinary man can do an ordinary thing.

But, on the contrary, simple endurance, standing still under a load that is almost heavier than you can sustain, there is in that no flavor or suggestion of inspiration. Suffering does not nerve a man to endure suffering. There is in it no element of momentum. It reduces simply to a bare matter of staying power. As in the shipwreck described in the Acts, it becomes a question of casting out the anchors and simply waiting for the morning—*holding on* till daylight.

St. Paul moved hither and thither through Asia and Europe in his magnificent missionary tours, and we presume that he was prayerful through them all and sought unto God for his wisdom and grace; but,

being human, he was doubtless kept moving not only by the divine grace, but also by his own stimulated faculties of action, the vastness of his work and the novelties of the experience into which his enterprize ushered him. But the time when preëminently we do find St. Paul on his knees, seeking unto God in long and importunate prayer, was not when he had a great sermon to preach or a long epistle to write, or a great journey to make, but when he had a little miserable, pricking, stinging thorn in the flesh to bear. There was nothing that could exactly be called exhilarating in that. It cut into the nerve, but could hardly be said to make nerve.

Besides that, our actions issuing in palapable effects, remind us that we are good for something. I suppose that in this feeling of not being any longer of any account lies one of the saddest experiences of old age. Laid by; buried but not interred. The desire which the aged, just as their juniors, have, to *do* something, may spring in part from a wish to be of benefit to somebody, or of service to the cause of the Master, but inexplicably bound up with these motives is the pleasure of seeing ourselves duplicated, advertized in our results, as people glance at their own portrait on the wall, or read interestedly their own name in print. Action then has this to facilitate it, which mere endurance has not. In all large activities, even our best and our Christian, there is an ingredient of self-consciousness. All

earthly holiness frays out into a fringe of conceit. But in suffering, in simply bearing there is no double of ourselves that adds itself to us in reënforcement. We are thrown back upon our own resources and upon the staying power of him who keepeth in perfect peace those whose mind is stayed on him.

The hardest kind of endurance is that when the circumstances are such that there is no sort of activity into which the suffering can let itself out, and endurance is the only thing left. Pain, even physical pain, is diminished, or at least covered up, by physical activity, and soldiers mortally wounded will sometimes fight through to the end of the battle before they are apprised of their injury. In action there is a narcotizing effect, and deed gives escape to pain, something as tears help to wash away sorrow. So when our feelings have been injured we do not retaliate because of our heroism or because our dignity needs to be avenged; we retaliate because it is easier to retaliate than not to; not because of our heroism but our lack of it—as water near the edge of the sea breaks into foam and spray, not because there is so much water, but so little. And after all it is fully as much the little aggravations that it is hard to get along with quietly and enduringly as it is aggravations that are larger and more conspicuous. A great strain we anticipate, and get ourselves measurably adjusted to before it overtakes us; but

small exasperations are like gnats, you feel the sting before you see the gnat, and then it is too late.

This explains why it is that it is so much easier to be saintly in large and public places than it is at home, no matter how paradisaic the home may be. About public Christianity there is an element of dress parade. We keep our scouts out and ourselves well in hand. Clerical piety is not to be gauged by the services of the pulpit, nor the piety of elders and deacons by the performances of the conference room. To use a technical phrase, men are spiritually "gotten up" for those occasions. A man's Christian measure is to be taken when he is at his average and when his condition is due to the ordinary stress of the Lord, and not to the exceptional strain of circumstances.

When our thought is upon inconspicuous holiness there opens before us a large area of meditation. We estimate people upon the basis of their achievements. We ask, "What have they done?" We erect monuments to perpetuate the memory of their discoveries, their exploits, the battles they have won. Hence it comes about that many men but very few women are monumented. But human worth, like the Lord's worth, is to be tested by the simple power of sweet endurance, patiently standing in one's lot to the end of the days. In the sphere of feminine experience there is ordinarily very little that is overwhelmingly stimulating. The feminine

life, if it be truly feminine, is usually quietly lived, with none of that incentive that makes great, toilsome achievement easy to members of the other sex. Society will rise no higher than the home, and the measure of the home is the mother. In the last anaylsis the world's downward pressure is sustained by woman—and more than the public generally suspects, the man's talent for achievement is supported by the wife's and the mother's genius for quiet, continuous, patient endurance.

Only one word more, and that is a message I would love to have you take to any member in your households who is laid one side, any one who by infirmity of disease or of years is past the point of active usefulness, and whose only province is now to wait and to be patient. Say to them that the power to endure is greater than the power to do. Say to them that in their case, as in that of the Lord, it is not so much action as it is suffering that ripens the soul and makes it heir to the heavenly promises. And say to them, moreover, that it was by an experience kindred to theirs, in the exercise of patience rather than in the performance of work, that the Lord attested his divineness and fulfilled his heavenly commission.

The Lord take care of all our aged and sick ones and foster them by the comforts of his spirit and grace. May it be our disposition not so much to pray that we may be mighty in word and deed as

that we may be mighty in our power to bear and endure; that whether we have the sword put in our hand to wield or not, we may at any rate be equipped with the girdle, the breastplate, the sandals, the helmet and the shield. "And may the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen!"

XVI

Christ Still Escaping From Entombment.

Whom God Hath Raised Up, Having Loosed the Pains of Death; Because It Was Not Possible That He Should Be Holden of It.—Acts ii:24.

DEAD, and yet not able to continue dead. A stone sepulcher, and yet not equal to the strain of the strange body that was entombed in it. "*Not possible*" that he should be holden of it. It is just that "not possible" that we are going to think about and be glad over this morning.*

The world has never made a great deal of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the widow's son of Nain, or the ruler's daughter or the Shunamite's son. There are two kinds of resurrection; there is a natural resurrection and there is an artificial resurrection. Something as there are two kinds of waking up from sleep; one is waking up because something has roused you; the other is waking up because you have had your sleep out. Something roused Lazarus. Elisha roused the Shunamite's son. Jesus has had his death-sleep out. Artifice *versus* nature. It never could have been

* Preached on Easter Sunday.

said of the ruler's daughter that God raised her up, loosing the pains of death because it was *not possible* that she should be holden of it. It *was* possible, most possible. One reason why the world has made so much more of Jesus' resurrection than of Lazarus' is because there is some appreciation of the broad difference between the two in this respect. In the rending of the Lord's sepulcher we are dealing with a distinct matter. It is an event on another plane. It is interesting how people will feel such a difference as this without ever having gone into the nice anatomy of it. It almost seems as though out of pity for our slow-footed thinking faculties God had provided us with a set of automatic powers that feel without going to the trouble of thinking.

At any rate, people have never pinned their hope of immortality to Lazarus' resurrection, and they have to the Lord's. No one ever said that Lazarus brought life and immortality to light, and St. Paul did say that Christ brought life and immortality to light. And something of the core of the case lies in this particular clause we are upon: "Because it was *not possible* that he should be holden of it." We gain from Christ's instance a sense of resurrection power working from within outward; in other instances, the sense of resurrection power working from without inward. Here it is something indigenous. Here it is like the wheat-grain growing up out of the ground because

there is intrinsic impulse making it grow up; resurrection inheres in its nature; it is not possible that it should be holden; rising is a part of its genius.

The Lord's life was somehow in his own hands. It was singular language that, some time prior to his death, he used in speaking of his death, when he said: "I lay down my life, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Under any vicissitude his life was such a thing that he kept his own hand upon it. His life was such a thing that limitations did not limit it; obstructions were no embarrassment to it; death was not fatal to it.

Life under any circumstances, life of any kind is a wonderful thing, spiritual life, animal life, yea, even vegetable life. We cannot say much about it, only wonder at it. No one can produce life. Science has as yet shown no first symptoms of being able to manufacture any living thing. Nor can science tell us anything about life. It can speak long and most interestingly of what life can do and how marvelously it can display itself, but when we come to the matter of life itself we are at the fascinating edge of an unknown world. So small a thing as a bit of live bud is the nigh shelving beach of an untraveled sea that has no farther shore short of the throne of God. In contemplating such matters thought gains an upward lift that never leaves it so long as it con-

tinues to be thought. An acorn lying, for months, still, brown and insensible, with a slight change of environment, begins to become dimly conscious of itself; and waking up into a mighty tree that fills the air, greens and withers, and greens and withers while children grow old and generations pass away.

And then there is something strange and thrilling in the way in which even vegetable life asserts itself, the cool and imperturbable sovereignty which it seems almost to feel over the inanimate world that raves and beats around it; the way in which it will build its own fiber out of the bitter assaults of the storm; the way in which it will break down into the privacy of the deep earth, convert the ground's obstinacy into the material of its own security, dispose its roots according to its own mighty will, plow into the rocks and wrench the seamed granite asunder at the pressure of the might of its own irresistible life-power. All of this is wonderful, and we can feel no surprise that the devout biologist bows with a kind of adoration before the living world, and finds in its revelations a Bible older than the Scriptures of Moses, whose pages he turns with a reverence that easily mounts up into worship.

But then the most marvelous thing about it all is that this is only the first beginning of the matter; it is but the silvery edge of the lunar disk that is waiting to widen into the full moon. And it is so passing strange that men can use these nigh wonders of

this wonderful, living world to block and bar their passage into the realms beyond, instead of treading them as avenues conducting into fields of more living green, and into the kingdom of God teeming with a more supernal life. It sometimes seems as though if this new, living world of ours had not been quite so wonderful men's thoughts might more easily have broken into the liberty of the air; that less of verdure in the valleys would have driven them to search for the more brilliant flowers that wax and blossom upon the mountains; and that had there been a little less sunshine on the ground, their eyes might more easily have lifted themselves to the light that brightens the stars. Blessed would we be if the nigh wonders and the vegetable miracles of each recurring Spring would serve us only as alphabet in which to spell out to our own thoughts and hearts the events that are afar, and the living processes of the growing years of God.

It is a long way from the buried acorn cracking in the dark to the rending of the tomb of the Son of God in the morning twilight of the world's first Easter; and yet our thought to-day is upon the same feature in the two instances—the life element, vegetable in one, divine in the other, but working out with an easy expanse, shattering confinement by the native tension of its own energy; with facile sufficiency disrupting its own confinement and crushing its own bonds. "It was not possible that he should

be holden of it." It seems to me we can almost see the very steps of the transaction, divine life in the grave unnerving the clasp of death and striving to fracture the meshes of fatality; and all of that, not by virtue of extrinsic reinforcement, but out of the abundance of its own easy sufficiency, the exuberance of its irresistible fulness of divine life.

Now all of that brings almost to our very senses, and almost to the touch of our fingers' ends, the event of divine resurrection which the great church catholic on earth, and I should not be surprised if in heaven too, to-day celebrates. But not only is there a great historic meaning in this resurrection emergence of Christ from the sepulcher, but it seems to me there is a vast parable meaning in it also; that the divine life quietly mastering the power of death that Easter morning, easily breaking forth from the cold clasp of the rock grave into light, liberty and sunshine, is a picture in small of what divine life on earth is everywhere and always doing.

That is the grand meaning of history, slow resurrection of the divine life that is buried in it, and that every day strains a little more the gritty sepulcher it is entombed withal; not because you and I try to drive into the enshrouding rock the wedges of our holy endeavor, not because liberating and resurrecting power is borne in upon it from any outward source; but because of the strengthening tension and growing push of its own resistless life that is

eternally destined to break loose from the confinement of death because it is not possible that it should be holden of it. All the sin that is in the world, and the apathy and the obstinacy, and the ignorance and the hopelessness, what is it but so much vast, cold granite tomb in which the immanent buried life of God is working itself forth day and night, century after century, as the dawn slowly reddens toward the perfect glory of the full day and the ushered kingdom for whose coming we reverently pray.

In the struggle of this entombed but waking and emerging life, we behold the secret of the convulsions by which the centuries are rent; the vast upheavals by which strata of event are disorderedly piled; the profound chasms that are struck down into the solid depths of history. You remember the old legend, perhaps, which Virgil tells of Enceladus, the giant son of Titan, who was overwhelmed under Mount Ætna, whose breath was interpreted by the poets to be the flames issuing from the volcano's mouth, and the tremors of the mountain and the quaking of the island of Sicily to be the struggles of the buried giant as he turned in his living grave and struggled toward liberty and resurrection. Oh! in how many ways the divine spirit of all truth has been working through all the ages of the world and giving even pagan minds a presentiment and suspicion of the deep things of man and history of

God! And we only then begin to understand history, or are in a temper to approach its contemplation, when we appreciate all the revelations, revolutions and vicissitudes of event as being the immanent breath of God become a brightness in the air, the moving of his confined Spirit and buried presence become a tremor among the years. As geologists delight to lay bare the rocks and track the pathway upon them worn by the archaic forces of fire and flood, so it seems to me there is no grander effort of which human mind in the range of immaterial things is capable, than to trace the movements of human history, considering those movements always as being steadily marshaled by the generalship of God's ordering spirit, and every advance toward freer living, truer thinking, sweeter acting and holier worshipping as being one more blow with which the rising Lord of life strikes the grim casing of his tomb, and shatters himself a pathway out into the light and splendor of the world's final Easter.

Think again of this same confined Spirit of God, as struggling in quiet resurrection against the barriers of sin, ignorance and prejudice that hinder the evangelization of the world. Remembering how the claims of the Gospel cut directly athwart the stalwart passions of every human heart, I cannot understand how any man, with a mind that is appreciative, and that has a grasp upon the history of the victor-

ies achieved by the cross, can escape the conclusion of a God-Spirit striving in the midst of it all, and rending its way out like an entombed Jesus breaking forth into the light and liberty of full resurrection. There is no argument for the divineness of Christianity like the steady, irresistible, onward march of Christianity. And it has been so from the first. There is not an obstruction conceivable by man or devil that has not been flung down against the river of life to dam its flow. And still its currents of cleansing and irrigation are diffusing themselves throughout the total area of our globe, never so rapidly as now; and hardly a month goes by but some new language or dialect is made to human minds the vehicle of the blessed story.

With what wonderful persuasion of divineness would all this work upon our minds and upon every mind, if we, standing at some distant planetary outlook, could thence have watched the gradual widening and lengthening of the band of Gospel light from the old Jerusalem days forward, the slowly broadening sea of evangelization, creeping steadily higher along all its coasts, beating against one grim headland after another of enmity and vice, islanding the higher and higher hills and then submerging them; sending forth friths that prolonged the deepening waters out among cruel and pagan wastes: every new century and almost every new year, testifying by its expanding coastline to the absolute

inexhaustibleness of its fountain of supply. It is the same thing over again, a sepulcher entombing a waking divine Lord, and it was not possible that he should be holden of it; antagonism compacted to granitic hardness; sin rolled as a stone against the door of the sepulcher and sealed with malignity and cruelty: cunning posted as a watch upon it. But the night is going by, it is a divine presence that is straining at the grave clothes and struggling out from entombment, and every new tribe that has the Gospel brought to it, every new island out in mid-ocean that is vocal to-day with Easter praises, every new dialect that this April spells out "Resurrection" to the wondering eye of the untaught pagan, is one more bond burst from the nail-pierced hands and one more blow with which the rising Lord of life strikes the grim casing of his tomb and shatters himself a pathway out into the light and splendor of the great world's Easter.

And then, again, an imprisoned divine Lord is struggling to full resurrection within the entombing religion of the world. One of the unappreciated marvels of our very Bible is the way in which, from the beginning of it to the end, it marks the steady rise of that current of divine truth which it channels. There is not a greater mistake made, nor a sadder one, than the habit of treating the Bible as a dead level of divine revelation. Its first lessons are but the seed-corn out of which, through the successive

seasons of four thousand years, the primary germ has been unfolding into to-day's blossomed and fruited Tree of Life. It was a divine thing then; divine in its inception as it is in its finish; just as the confined germ is as live a thing as the great air-filling elm after a growth of two hundred years. But away back there it was a divine thing perpetually striving and struggling forth into unsepulchered life against the constraints and confinements that human small-mindedness and false-heartedness put upon it. Divine, but divineness bandaged! Eternal spirit, but eternal spirit in a vault. Four thousand years of resurrection in the domain of truth! The Word which in the beginning was with God and was God, breaking off year by year and century by century the coarse integuments of human stupidity and carnality with which, forsooth, even divineness requires to come into the world encased.

Yes, if we had an eye at once analytic and comprehensive we could almost count the year-marks of growth in our blessed old Bible, as we can count the rings in the cross-section of a century oak. Not that the divine mind, to be sure, is growing, but by dint of the irresistibleness of its expansive power, it is steadily breaking through the limitations of human thought that overspread it, and becoming an open and realized presence of light in the midst of the firmament, like the great sun perforating and stealthily dissipating and at last breaking through

the cloud, and making all the air bright and carpeting all the ground with sunshine. And the long struggle goes forward and the slow resurrection proceeds; but rock is no impediment to a divine body struggling to be free, nor man's error any embarrassment to the intense, vital germ of the divine spirit of truth; and each false hope shaken off, each small opinion broken, is one more bond burst from the nail-pierced hands, and one more blow with which the rising Lord of life strikes the grim casing of his tomb, and shatters himself a pathway out into the light and splendor of the great world's final Easter.

The Lord, too, is sepulchered, and has always been most gloomily sepulchered, in the theology of his church. To disparage theology is to forget the divine spirit of truth which the pettiness and faultiness of human conception encases; and to ignore or lightly to pass over the history of theologic thought for the past forty centuries is to be oblivious of the slow, steady process of resurrection through which the confined spirit of God is straining and crushing, age by age, the tough integument by which he is so jealously guarded, the tomb of petrified opinion around which his lovers keep tearful vigil, and to which in the gray light of the early morning they gather with linen bandages and spices "as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

All the old and later hard-fought battles on the arena of theologic thought win dignity, yea even sub-

limity, so soon as you conceive the real *personnel* of the lusty duel. It is not one set of small human opinions arrayed against another set of small human opinions. It is not man against man. It is truth against error; it is the eternal against the temporal; it is the whole against the partial; it is the Infinite shaking itself free from the encompassing meshes of the finite; it is the waking Lord chafing against his prison house, the rising Lord rending his sepulcher, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Hence the continual sense of victory there is in such theological strife. You think it is you that are making history, and your words that are a light in the air and a tremor along the ground. No, the great Titan is breathing under Ætna, and the quaking of Sicily is the struggle of Enceladus. The echoes are the blows of the Lord of Life; the ruins are fresh fragments of his wrenched and crumbling sepulcher, and every theological battle well fought through to the end is another stage in the resurrection history of the entombed Christ, swelling prelude to the final consummating Easter-tide. Theological controversy thus, so far as it is the cracking away of archæological deposit and dogmatic stratification is but the emergence of the God-Spirit into freer air and wider liberty, and therefore can no more be stamped out or whistled down by a dogmatic constabulary than you could stop the growth of a California pine by girdling its trunk with cotton

yarn, or than the resurrection of the Son of God at Jerusalem could have been delayed by piling more granite upon the roof of the sepulcher or posting more Roman police at its door.

And then, just in a word, the irrepressible Lord of Life is immured and struggling inside the ethics of the world. There is nothing in the history of the human race more calculated to amaze us than its improvement in morals; especially when you remember that every step of such improvement is taken in the teeth of every man's native tendency and original passion. No man ever becomes better except as he has divine power given him to trample on himself. And to deny that there has been moral improvement is to be ignorant of history or to give the lie to history.

We become strangely oblivious of iniquity that transpired more than ten years ago, and so have little sense of the steady trend of moral advance. Old crime becomes in time almost luminous, as distant sewage waxes radiant. I really believe that the vices of what we call the good men of olden times we cherish almost as warmly as we do their virtues. Present iniquity is the only iniquity that seems to us thoroughly iniquitous. Therefore, one of the easiest views, even as it is the most supremely false, is that morals are hardly holding their own. Why, we preach about Jacob and we apostrophize old Abraham; but the cool unbedizened truth of the matter

is that there is not one of the choicest of the saints of the patriarchal age that would be tolerated in modern times outside of Sing-Sing or Blackwell's Island. That is nothing against the patriarchs. They are to be judged by their times, not by our times. As I say, it is all of it a growth; and the hindered, entombed, struggling life of the Lord is the divine sap that permeates that growth.

History from the beginning of it to the end of it, is all resurrection; the straining, tenser and tenser straining, of the immured life of God in the world. Here is our hope. Here is the ground of our confidence. Here is the material of our own little endeavor. We praise God for the irrepressible and irresistible life that is in his son Jesus Christ. We celebrate the empty grave with songs of loud acclaim. We decorate the vacant sepulcher with the perfumed beauty of blossomed flowers. But while in this we are memorially celebrating the past, we would also, O God, by the same act anticipate and celebrate that greater coming Easter-tide, when every bandage that human pettiness and ignorance wind about our risen Lord shall be sundered, when the whole sepulcher of world-sin in which he is yet entombed shall be rent, and the Lord of Life move forth a free Lord over a free earth—a glorified Lord in the midst of a redeemed world.

XVII

Eternal Life a Present Possession.

Verily, Verily, I Say Unto You, He that Heareth My Word and Believeth Him that Sent Me Hath Eternal Life.—John v:24.

THE wide reach of this passage only makes it the more necessary that in our attempts to understand it, our words should be small and our thoughts exceeding simple; just as the steeper the mountain we are climbing, so much the shorter and quieter require to be the steps taken in its ascent.

He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath eternal life. For the purpose of our study a verse has been designedly selected that makes eternal life a matter of the present. I suppose that in our common thinking the temporal and eternal are not only opposed to each other, but are so thought of as though the temporal is what lies near to us in point of time, and the eternal that which comes afterward and stretches out interminably and invisibly into the ages beyond; something as the water, which lies close to land and that slides up on to the beach when the tide comes in, we call the bay, and only that which lies farther out beyond the

touch of the continent and the ken of the eye is named by us the ocean. The eternal stands to us in general for the ages which are untraveled and still out of sight; somewhat as the spaces that lie out among the stars are called celestial, not because they differ from the terrestrial space that is immediately around our own globe, but because they are so far away. When we glance from the mountains to the stars we are conscious of a change simply in the direction of our vision. When we think from the temporal to the eternal we are conscious of much the same change in the angle of our thought: and when we speak of going into the eternal world it is not likely that we think of anything that is now, but only of some infinite bye-and-bye, that will not come till "now" is quite finished and vanished.

If, therefore, we are not accustomed to the idea, it is with something of surprise that we are overtaken by these words of our Lord, who contradicts the current conception of the matter; who conjugates the eternal in the present tense, and makes the life eternal to be a possibility of the instant. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me *hath* eternal life.

There is considerable here that will not only be of interest to us in our attempts to think correctly, but that will certainly minister to us in our desires to live a richer, stronger and fuller life.

We can conceive of a man with an imagination so

comprehensive and vivid that while lying out in his little row-boat, hard by the shore, with its keel scouring the yellow sand, and beating the shoaling bottom with each new incoming wave, and his own view confined to the little land-locked inlet in which he happens to lie drifting, nevertheless could realize the oneness of that inlet with the wide outside sea into which it opens, and feel himself to be indeed upon the sea, even while his boat is hardly off the rocks or clear of the reeds that fringe its margin. It would likewise be easy to imagine an astronomer who looked with an eye so broad and containing that our own globe as well as the sun, Sirius and Alcyone, should be felt to be included in the one great universe, and even the very hill upon which his observatory is built and his telescope swung, be realized to be part of the celestial world. And in something the same way, if only free play be given to our thoughts, may we find growing up in our minds a sense of the times that are everlasting, and learn to feel the oneness of our own years with all the years that have been, and that are coming, and appreciate that however near we lie to the shore, however shallow the tide upon which we are floating, and however land-locked the little inlet upon which we are upborne, nevertheless even these waters are continuous with the sea that lies outside the bar, are swept by the winds that come in from the distances, swell with the tide that rolls in from the depths, and that

the years that we live, and the moments among which we move, are to the mind of God part and parcel of that great everlasting that makes this year kindred with the long years that are gone, and the vast ages that are to come.

While all that view of the case is expansive and lends a meaning and a solemnity to the times through which we are passing, we are not even yet come to the best and truest part of our matter. For in dealing with the everlasting, as we have just now done, we have not quite touched the eternal. There belongs to the "eternal" a quality that the "everlasting" knows nothing of. The revisers have replaced "everlasting" in the old reading of our text by "eternal" in the new reading. The difference between the two is important, and we shall have no difficulty in seeing what that difference is.

Let your imagination, if you please, paint for you the picture of a river slipping down its channel in continuous flow, rushing forward with impetuous current in the spring when the snows are melting and the mountains are full of water, but contracting its volume and retarding its pace in the heat and drought of summer: and alongside the river, with its base laved by the river's flow, a mountain sloping up overshadowingly in massiveness and silent unchangeableness. Now those two features in your fancy-picture will each leave upon you its own peculiar impression. One of them is an affair of times and

seasons; the river will obey the calendar and keep step with the almanac. Very likely a system of terraces, left behind upon the subsidence of the river, will put you thinking upon the history of the river in ages and centuries antecedent. All this matter of rise and fall and contraction and velocity is full of the time element; it reduces to days and seasons and years. Then you look away from the flowing river to the still mountain. You stop counting. You close your almanac. Years and centuries seem all at once a little out of place. The seasons and the generations seem to slip across the mountain, and to slide over it with no more effect than the mists that gather in its folds and lie along its slopes and then are dissipated. It seems to have nothing to do with time —to belong to a different world from that in which watches tick and clocks strike. Even inspired mind seemed to feel it so, and we read in Scripture about the eternal mountains, not simply the "everlasting" mountains, as it was in the old reading of Habakkuk, but the "eternal" mountains, as it stands in the new reading—the mountains viewed as something which rise up in the midst of the years, but to which the years have no relevance; something that is in the midst of time and still is timeless, as Teneriffe with its Peak of Teyde stands out in the midst of the sea, but spires up 12,000 feet untouched by the sea, and in haughty indifference to the sea.

Accustomed as we are to the limitations of time,

and to a world whose experiences and activities are so largely calculated in terms of months and years, it is a vast thing for our souls to stand even imaginatively upon the margin of a realm where time does not signify and where years do not come to mention. And we need not at all confine ourselves to the fancy-picture of river and mountain by which we have just tried to aid ourselves. There is much that comes to common expression and that makes out a large part of our experience, that is of the same timeless sort; very much that it would never occur to us to date, and that it would indeed be absurd to think of dating. It is not an uncommon thing to speak of justice, for instance, as being eternal. We do not mean by that simply that justice has always been and will always be; we intend by it the deeper idea that justice is something that time and years have nothing to do with, just as affections cannot be weighed in scales, nor thoughts computed in inches. Just as the drifting mists do not alter the mountains so the drifting years do not alter righteousness and justice. They have nothing in common; they belong to realms that are distinct.

So of love and mercy and long-suffering and patience, you could never put a tag upon any one of them to designate their date or age or birthday, any more than you could put a train of logic on a railway track, or raise a suspicion with a windlass. All of these—love, holiness, beauty, truth and the like are eternal;

but, as you see, they are not eternal because they last so many years, but because they are of such a kind that the years have nothing to do with them; they neither come with the years nor go with the years nor age with the years; they have their being independently of all considerations or influence of time, and would continue to be though time were to stop, and existed already before the years began.

The eternal, then, is not a thing to be referred to the future and thought of as something that will come, or that we shall come to, when the years that compose the present are past and gone. It denotes rather a realm which embraces all those energies and principles which, to be sure, have their being in the midst of the years, but independently of the years, and which form the framework to which whatever is historic and evanescent in nature and history is appointed to attach itself. The eternal world, then, not succeeds the temporal world but underlies it, suffuses it. It is a silent and massive reality to-day as much as it will be a million years from to-day: and, as we have seen, contributions from this realm are continually being made to our own life and experience. We are having constantly to do with matters that we feel have pertaining to them no element of time and no ingredient of perishableness. It is a beautiful thing to be merciful and forgiving, and it never occurs to us to inquire how old the beauty of such demeanor is. It is the flashing up into our eye of a light that

beams from a realm wherein we are living, indeed, but whose processes are not marked with those designations of young and old, new and antiquated, that distinguish the lapse of events, the outflowering of the trees, or the pulse-beats of our hearts.

It would take a great while to enumerate all the respects in which the timeless realm we know as the eternal breaks gently through into the region of our temporal life and gives to it more than a temporal and evanescent significance; all those suggestions of beauty, those intimations of priceless worth, of truth that abides, however numerously and swiftly the years sweep past it, of goodness and holiness that mount up in divine steadfastness against which the centuries unavailingly beat themselves, as the waves dash themselves fruitlessly against walls of imperturbable granite.

And it is worth more than gold or science to know, and in our inmost hearts to feel that we are created into relations of kinship with this unseen world that abides in still stability beneath the shows of things, this timeless world that is neither borne upon the tide of the years nor worn by their abrasion.

There is a good deal more than inspiration in it. If a man is drifting down the rapids, and his boat is being driven by the imperious stress of a pursuing tide, it is a good deal more than an inspiration to feel that boat caught by the giant interposition of a rock that rises up stanch and unswerving from out the

fevered and seething waters. It is not only inspiration, it may be rescue. We are afloat upon the wild and slumberless current of the months and the years, and it is salvation the way in which the great timeless, eternal world, that underlies the tide, sends up through the pitiless rapids secure shafts of rescue against which we can guide our boat, and to which we can anchor it. We feel to praise the Lord that there is something in our own bosoms that responds to the hints and communications that come to us from out that realm whose energies and processes know no succession of season, and no distinction of times; that the possibilities of the eternal are so within us, that we can answer to its suggestions and be made eternal by conference with what is eternal.

In whatever relations we stand, if we are going to grow we have got to grow by feeding upon our environment. If in any respect we are going to become in fact what we are in possibility, it must be by the appropriation of nutriment that is germane. The germ that is wrapped up in the acorn does not become oak except by the appropriation to itself of material that is fitted to make oaken fiber. Our own physical growth is conditioned by physical assimilation. Endowed with the instinct of intelligence if we are going to become intelligent beings and personal embodiments of the truth, it is conference with the truth and assimilation of the truth, that is the only means of making us so. In every respect we become that

which we feed upon. As artists, whatever germinal impulse beauty–wards we may be endowed withal, our growth as discerners of the beautiful and producers of the beautiful, will come only by contemplation of the beautiful and communion with it. We are clearly upon the track of a safe and sure law here. We can trust the law to guide us clear out to the end of the kingdom of God, and say that if we want to be eternal we have got to become it by feeding on that which is eternal, knowing it, living in it, communing with it, growing upon it.

Even on the human side there is a science of salvation as much as there is a science of art, or a science of physical growth. The cause has been harmed by the arbitrary ingredients that have become mixed with it. A man is not going to be eternal after he dies unless he is already eternal before he dies. To be eternal is to have become ourselves the personal embodiment of that which lies deeper than the years, and which, because the years did not bring it with them when they came, will have no power to carry it away with them when they go. To use our Lord's own illustration, it is to be built on rock that is so much deeper than the torrents from the mountain, and than the shifting sands along the water-course, that neither the coming of the rain nor the sloughing of the sand will plow down to rock-bottom. And yet that illustration, although coming from the Lord, denotes far more in a mechanical than in a vital way

the real genius of this matter of eternal life and eternal growth: and when he had been with his disciples longer and had let them more deeply into the truth and substance of things, he left behind the illustration of the house built upon the rock, and began to tell them how, if they would have begun in them a life that should stand fast and imperishable, whether amid the flowing or the ebbing of the years, they must win it by appropriating to themselves the eternal, assimilating it, growing upon it.

Here fall into line all those utterances of our Lord wherein he represents himself as the bread of life: all those references to himself and to the truth and to the Holy Spirit of God as the media and material of life in his believers. In all of which he is dealing with the possibilities of the eternal that are in them, and seeking to make them eternal by supplying them with that nutriment of the eternal that is fitted to make them such. We become more and more eternal by conference and communion with what is eternal, even as we become wiser and wiser by intercourse with wisdom.

It is at this distinct point that we begin to learn the real meaning and purpose of faith. Every little while I am told by one and another that he would like to believe this particular matter or that particular matter in regard to the Bible or in regard to Christ or the future life; as though if his mind could only be brought intellectually to consent to it, the

consummation would be reached and a great result achieved. And when there is so much intellectual fencing about specific matters of that sort going on, it is not strange that such an idea gets abroad. Being prepared to assent to this or that particular statement in regard to Christ, for example, is a very distinct thing from faith. Faith is such a personal yielding of ourselves to another as brings us into living contact with another and so makes us recipient of what it lies within that other to confer. The child becomes like his father by faith in his father, because his faith is that inward surrender that makes him susceptible to every impression and communication that goes forth from his father. A picture of it is seen in the plastic wax submitting to the stamp of the seal; in the susceptible petal yielding to the penciling of the sun. It is sad to reflect how much of mistake, confusion and controversy have come into the church by calling intellectual assent faith, intellectual hesitancy infidelity, and slurring over that personal self-commitment which in its very nature is faith, and one grain of which is of more significance than a whole ton of intellectual affirmations.

Faith is, then, first of all that personal attitude on our own part that holds us within reach of the conveyances that are waiting to be made to us, and is the means of our eternal life because through it the eternal is made over to us, is assimilated by us, and becomes part of our own timeless and imperishable

self. So that we are eternal, not because God has arbitrarily decreed that we shall be, but because through the avenue of our faith-surrender he has conveyed to us that which makes us such; and it is fulfilled what the Lord said—"He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath eternal life."

And now let me say in a closing word, that whether we be in the church or out of it, we have got to be careful. If we want to be eternal after we die, we must be eternal before we die. We shall go out with the tide if we are the mere creatures of the tide. Our association is necessarily in considerable measure with the things that perish; but if they make out the sum and substance of our being, then when they are gone we are gone, and we are wrecked when the boat is wrecked upon which we have taken passage. It is therefore our prayer that underneath this surface-world of form and change in which we act and move we may at the same time be living in an unseen world of things that abide, that neither come in nor go out with the years, the world of truth which is imperishable, the world of God and of the Word which was in the beginning with God, the world of eternal mind and thought and love and holiness, whether of God or his children, that so our years may be spent in strength and quietness, we have a continual sense of God's great undergirding, and of the immovable Rock upon which we stand

and of the imperishable life of God that we enshrine, that when the tide of our own swift years shall ebb, we shall be able to feel that we have within us a life which the coming of the years did not bring, and which therefore their retreat cannot bear away, and so rest in assurance and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.

XVIII

We Know In Part.

For We Know in Part, and We Prophesy in Part; But When That Which Is Perfect Is Come, Then That Which Is in Part Shall Be Done Away.
—First Corinthians, xiii:9, 10.

"WE know in part." We wish we knew more. To appreciate the fact that we know but little and to understand some of the reasons why we know so little, will help us, I think, to be more pleasantly reconciled to the fact of our own ignorance, will aid us also in the still more difficult matter of being resigned to the ignorance of other people, and will contribute to remove some of the obstacles that lie in the way of a completer knowledge on our own part and that of others, and so open for us a little more widely the door that conducts to that prospective region, beheld by the Apostle, wherein we shall know even as also we are known.

This reference of St. Paul to the unfinished condition of our knowledge we do not understand to be here alleged in criticism, but only to have been put forward as simple statement of a natural and necessary fact. It is no fault of ours that we cannot on a

Winter's night look out and see the Southern Cross. The horizon comes in the wrong place for that. That constellation is not in sight, at least it is not in sight to us: it does not form part of the heavens as viewed from that region of earth where we live, and where we have good reasons for supposing that God intended us to live. If it had fallen to our lot to dwell in Patagonia or Cape Colony, why, then we should have lived under the blaze of the southern stars all the time, and it would then have been as impossible for us to make out the Great Bear and Cassiopea as it would be for us now, with all our astronomical appliances, to get a glimpse of Argo or the Centaur.

The illustration just used sets out in the light two facts, not only the fact that no eye is able to see everything, but that other fact, that each eye has an outlook of its own natively belonging to it.

Truth is like a fixed diamond ground down to a thousand facets, and you must shift your position in order to catch the particular flash from each individual facet; which is what in the matter of truth we do not do; it is what in the matter of truth we cannot do.

Geographically we can migrate from latitude to latitude, and from longitude to longitude; topographically we can skip from street to street and from avenue to boulevard; but as regards truth, we can change neither our nationality nor our ad-

dress; truth is fixed, and we are born fixed in our relation to it.

We are individually created into a specific angle with the truth. Truth individualizes itself to each eye and distributes itself around, making only minute donations of its secret, and a separate, specific donation to each. It is with us in this respect much as it is with objects in their relation to a sunbeam, where one sort of material will take hold of a sunbeam and pull the blue out of it; another the green; another the red, and so on through the entire bundle of color bound up in a white ray.

Quite in the same way, each mind picks the particular truth that is native to it. We are so far forth constitutionally limited. It is like living on the west side of the house; if you live on the west side you cannot see the sun rise; if you live on the east side you cannot see it set. If we could have our choice it would be better if we lived in a room that faced every way and had windows all around; but there is no choice. Because a particular truth (and of course it is religious truth that we are thinking of just now especially), because a particular truth strikes directly into your eye, carrying with it, therefore, an irresistible appeal, it is no sign that it will tell with effect upon me or even come in sight of me. It is the way we are made. It has its advantages; it works concentration; some one aspect of truth we have power to take hold of and to feel

keenly, whereas, with only the same amount of power distributed over the whole truth nothing would outline itself sharply to us and no keen, burning sense of anything be wrought in us. By this method truth gets out into the air piecemeal, but it gets out into the air. It is the principle of the division of labor divinely set at work. It results in each man having his own little patch of truth to cultivate, and by that means he doubtless gets more produce on to the world's market than he would do if he had a whole hundred acre lot to cultivate scatteringly.

That ought to keep us steadily at work only on constructive lines, not destructive ones; telling what little we do see squarely and know earnestly and intimately; and continuing to tell it and letting the rest go. For all I am never able to see it, the Southern Cross is just as brilliant a constellation as Orion. A star is not brilliant because I happen to stand where its glory pours direct into my eye; it is brilliant because—it is brilliant. Exactly so it is of a truth; it is true because it is true, not because my eye happens to lie in the range of the truth's shining. If there is some reality that your mind looks right into and that therefore takes close, earnest hold upon you, but that your Christian or theological neighbor with a different natural outfit from yours has no sense of and no care for, it is not because he is an ugly Christian or a theological idiot,

but because your little star does not happen to shine where he stands. People do not quarrel about the same thing, but about different things, and get mad all the same because they imagine it is the same thing.

Bigotry is the name we are likely to give to the loyalty with which a man devotes himself to some particular aspect of truth that is not the same aspect that we devote ourselves to. Everything is peculiar till you have seen it and gotten used to it. The church could never dispense with what at different points in its history has been counted as orthodoxy, and just as little could it dispense with what at different points in its history have been counted as heresies. A heretic, not always, perhaps, but usually, is a man that is natively constructed at a new angle with the truth, so that his interior eye gets shone upon by a star that no one previously had ever caught shining. In that sense, orthodoxy always begins in heresy. Christ, when he came, was the most arrant heretic of history. Heresy is orthodoxy in the bud; and orthodoxy is heresy become acclimated.

That, then, is one reason why our knowledge is only a partial knowledge. We are born with an eye that is graduated to some particular truth or to a few particular truths, and not with a vision that spreads itself with equal facility over all truths. It works harm, but on the whole is doubtless a

good deal more advantageous than it is mischievous.

Another reason for this same incompleteness of our knowledge lies in the fact that we allow the one particular bent that we are born with to assert a certain despotism over us that tends to intensify by acquisition this same one-sidedness that is ours by nature. If, for example, there is some one particular truth of God's Word, or some special quality of thought in that Word, that we have a native bias for, we shall be almost certain to make that bias determine for us the portions of Scripture that we shall admit to our thought and our confidence. So that the one special appreciation that we have operates in a way to hinder our using means to develop new appreciations, much as the one glowing constellation that is in the direct range of our vision will be almost certain to prevent our scouring around to detect other constellations that are only imperfectly disclosed.

In this way we have, probably, each of us, constructed a little Bible of our own—have taken the whole spacious area of revealed truth and finished off from it, lathed and plastered, a little room for our private, particular occupancy, and in this way give pretty nearly exclusive attention to the nursing of that one tendency in us that of all others least needs nursing. The same holds of other books as well as of the Bible. Look at the library of any Christian thinker, and you will be able in three min-

utes to determine what his theological bent is, for the books that he buys and reads will be the books whose authors think what he thinks. The very particularity of his view operates to keep it narrow, and the books which nine times out of ten he will purchase will only be those that he can use as whetstones upon which to whet his particularity down to a thinner edge. The thing we know and that we feel intensely gets between us and what we have less zest for, and it may be said of our interest in this particular what is true of a river running between the mountains, that the swifter it flows the narrower its channel.

Then, too, it is a serious matter that the habit of thinking along some special line that is congenial to us, not only weakens our interest in truth lying upon other lines, but sometimes even impairs our *power* of appreciating truth lying upon other lines. Some of us are so statedly occupied and engrossed with the facts and events of free spirit as to be unable to interpret the meaning of facts that are physical or to find or to feel any significance in the testimony which physical science may bear to some doctrine of religion, whether for or against.

Just as a creature needs a different bodily construction to enable him to live and walk upon land from what he does to exist in water, so, to a certain degree, a different equipment is required to live and think in a region of spirit from what is required to adapt

one to a world of matter; and the more exclusively we are habituated to the former, the more awkward that very habituation will make us when we undertake to make any headway in the latter. That is one reason why the clergy have always been so unsusceptible to scientific appeal, and why the Church has never accepted a new theory upon physical matters as long as it was even respectable to deny it, and sometimes not till long after it had ceased to be respectable to deny it. Some of us use our scientific faculties so little that they become aborted and we lose all power to appreciate scientific facts. And the converse of that is equally true. Our mental powers shape themselves to the element they deal with and work in, like a dyer who becomes stained with his own dye-stuffs. So a man may have such a natural aptitude, and not only that, but such a developed aptitude, for thinking along the straight lines of physical event as to be almost destitute of the intellectual means of discerning, and still less of appreciating a fact that is spiritual. Engrossment with scientific pursuits is therefore regularly an embarrassment to religious conviction.

It is not that there is an inherent antagonism between science and religion; the galaxy of brilliant names whose subscription to religious truth was and is as hearty as their devotement to scientific truth is cordial and their authority as priests of science is confessed and applauded, is ample to disprove

that; but by failure to exercise spiritual faculties we lose spiritual power; by never looking at a thing we get so that we cannot see it when we do look.

That exactly is the peculiar difficulty that is regularly experienced in the effort to bring to Jesus Christ a man whose exclusive training has been a scientific one. So that in these days, when there is being so strong a pressure brought to bear in behalf of those branches of knowledge that deal with matter only, as opposed to such as pertain to the domain of free personality—like the languages, literature, law and history—there is something for Christian parents and Christian educators to think about. If you want your boy to be a Christian, see to it that he gets his mind trained in those faculties that will especially be called in play in the discernment and appreciation of spiritual truth. There is no danger of knowing too much about the physical facts of our globe, but if the mind is fed on nothing but physical facts, pretty soon it will not care to have any spiritual facts shown to it, and a little later, it will have only a blind eye to look at them with even if it is shown them. That, then, is the second reason we specify why our knowledge is only partial; we keep it reigned in on a straight track; we are tyrannized over by the *pettiness* of our interest in the truth, and what little we have a bent or a fancy for knowing, discounts, in our esteem, any truth that we do not

happen to know till it destroys both our interest in it and our capacity for it.

A third reason for the unfinished condition of our knowledge is that by a deliberate act of our own will we veto the truth. We say to the truth, "I won't have you." Truth depends for its power upon the concurrence of the mind as much as light depends for its power upon the concurrence of the eye. A truth coming to us always says to us, "By your leave." It knocks at the door and then stands outside waiting till some one comes and answers the knocker or the bell-pull. No man is likely to be persuaded against his will. There is a very true sense in which there is no force in an argument. If you want to saw wood, saw with the grain, not against it; if you want to split rocks never swing your sledge till you have found a cleavage crack to set your wedges up in. Persuading a man's mind does nothing towards persuading the man. Arguing with him will not do nearly as much toward starting a crack in him as some crack already in him will do toward letting in the argument and clinching it. You see it is the man that is the clincher and not the logic. You have seen a shoemaker drive shoe-pegs; if he undertook to drive in the peg before a place had been made for it by the awl, he would both bruise the boot-sole and splinter the peg; that is to say, he has to drive in the hole first. That is a picture of the way truth works; truth is modest and never goes in till it has been

asked in. Behold, I stand at the door and knock—is true of Christ and of his Gospel. We personally and individually decide just how much God's word shall do for us and how far it shall go with us. The preacher never drives it in; we let it in; we let it in just as far as we choose. We have exactly the same control over it that when standing at the water faucet in our dressing-room we have over the water in the supply-pipes: we can let it run as long as we like and stop it the instant we get enough.

If you could look around and inspect the interior auditory apparatus of the people that range themselves in church in front of the Bible or in front of a sermon, you could tell just exactly where they had got their gauge set, and therefore how much use there was in reading from the Bible or sermonizing to them. Good hearing is a far more difficult art than good preaching. A sermon depends one-quarter on the pulpit and three-quarters on the pew. What a superb opportunity to preach Peter had when just before commencing, Cornelius, speaking in behalf of the congregation, said, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." That was a call worth having; an open road all the way from God to the heart; no shut doors; no blinds drawn; no cotton in their ears; no consciences placarded "No Admittance;" minds, hearts, consciences, wills, gauged to everything that was in the air. It is no wonder

that ten verses farther along it is told us that even while Peter was at work in the pulpit the Holy Ghost fell upon the people in the pews. That is one of the things we should have supposed might have gone *without* telling.

The human mind is a strange thing, and God's truth is another strange thing, and they work wonderfully when once they get together, get so they touch. That is all that is wanted; there is such rich, true soil in every heart that if a seed-kernel of truth and a bit of mellow loam once begin to mix, something is bound to happen. Christ had perfect confidence in the truth, and he had just as much confidence that when once the heart had taken the truth fairly in, something would come of it; the Parable of the Sower teaches that; but it all hinges on the single matter of letting heart and truth absolutely touch, and there every man is his own master of the situation. In that lies the helplessness of the truth and the helplessness of the preacher of the truth. Each man's destiny in this respect is in his own hands. It turns on eloquent hearing, not on eloquent preaching. The best and most determinative part of every service is done before we get here, so far, at any rate, as relates to practical effects in our own lives. It may rain as hard as ever it did in the days of old Noah, but the rain will start no grass so long as the down-pour falls onto frozen ground. It will only slide off un-irrigatingly into the rivers

and roll away fruitlessly into the sea. The sky is for us as full of stars as we have eyes wherewith to behold, and the truth of God is for us wide, commanding and resistless, just according to the width with which we deliberately open our eyes to behold it, just according to the tender sincerity with which we yield our hearts to receive its message and to do its behest. That, then, is the third reason why we fall so far short of a perfect knowledge; we like an imperfect one better, and, ostrich-like, get away from danger by sticking our head in the sand.

This third reason is a self-condemnatory one; it will therefore be pleasanter to conclude briefly our discussion this morning by alluding to a fourth reason that has in it no quality of censure, and to say that there are certain elements of Christian knowledge that can come only with the years and indeed with the centuries. Experience is the only perfect teacher; we cannot learn beyond our years. We can of course crowd ourselves with facts, but that is not wisdom. We can store ourselves with the Bible but even that is not Christian maturity; it is like book-knowledge in general as compared with that totally distinct kind of acquaintance that comes by friction with time and concrete events. Wisdom is gained by the process of somehow letting the threads of truth weave themselves into the tissue of our own life; and therefore it is not a thing to be hurried any more than you can hurry the growing of

the corn, the ripening of the wine, the mellowing of the harp-string. The perfect violin has to have a great many airs played upon it before its resonance becomes perfect music.

Even reading the Bible is very much like studying the geography of an untraveled country; you will have to visit the country before ever you will quite understand what you have so painstakingly learned. Experience is expository; the Bible illuminates us but we illuminate the Bible. We make the Bible ours by our becoming its. We do not understand the Publican until we have been on our knees by the side of the Publican. We do not begin to fathom the story of the Prodigal and the father of the Prodigal until we have been in the far country not only—and who of us has not—but until we have returned from that country and have known what it is to stand in restored and reconciled relations with that father. Is there any one of us who feels that he has more than merely begun to understand Paul's love-chapter, the Thirteenth of Corinthians? We read and perhaps with some flippancy talk about the sustaining grace of God; but what do we know of God's sustaining grace except as we have cast our burden upon him, and how can we do that except as we have had some burden that we could cast upon him? Some of you have had, some of you without doubt have not had. There is a great deal of the best part of Christian truth that is invisible in sun-

shine. It is like the stars in that respect, which do not come out and shine at their best till evening.

The simple change, too, that comes with our steady departure from childhood and our approach toward years that are a good deal older brings us onto a new side of some matters. Perhaps we have found out that life is not what we once thought it was going to be. Possibly the present is not quite so real as it used to be, and very likely the great future is growing upon us; as while we are still a long way out at sea, the distant land-haze begins to take form on the edge of the horizon and to become a very real presence quite before the sea-swell begins to quiet into the stillness of marginal water or the feathery portents of the coming continent to hover about our masts. One day I was looking at two large telescopic photographs of the moon, one taken when the moon was at its full, the other taken a week later. In the latter, some of the mountain slopes of the moon that showed dull and lusterless in the earlier view, came out bright and glowing, as in the meantime the sun had passed along to the point where it could illumine the evening slopes of the mountains. I remarked this to the dealer whose hair had been whitened by the years. "Yes," he said, very quietly, but quite cheerily, withal, "Yes, the lights are very differently arranged when you get into the last quarter."

All of this is very truthfully as well as delicately

told in the following stanzas with which you are many of you doubtless already familiar:

"ROCK OF AGES."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
Thoughtlessly the maiden sung;
Fell the words unconsciously
From her girlish, gleeful tongue:
Sang as little children sing;
Sang as sing the birds in June;
Fell the words like light leaves down
On the current of the tune—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Let me hide myself in Thee,"
Felt her soul no need to hide—
Sweet the song as sweet could be,
And she had no thought beside;
All the words unheedingly
Fell from lips untouched by care,
Dreaming not that they might be
On some other lips a prayer—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
'Twas a woman sung them now,
Pleadingly and prayerfully;
Every word her heart did know—
Rose the song as storm-tossed bird
Beats with weary wing the air,
Every note with sorrow stirred,
Every syllable a prayer—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"
Lips grown aged sung the hymn,
Trustingly and tenderly,
Voice grown weak and eyes grown dim—
"Let me hide myself in Thee."
Trembling, though, the voice, and low
Ran the sweet strain peacefully,
Like a river in its flow;
Sang as only they can sing
Who life's thorny path have pressed;
Sang as only they can sing
Who behold the promised rest—
"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me"—
Sung above a coffin lid—
Underneath, all restfully,
All life's joys and sorrows hid;
Nevermore, O storm-tossed soul!
Nevermore from wind or tide,
Nevermore from billow's roll
Wilt thou need thyself to hide.
Could the sightless, sunken eyes,
Closed beneath the soft gray hair,
Could the mute and stiffened lips
Move again in pleading prayer,
Still, aye still, the words would be-
"Let me hide myself in Thee."

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